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# LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

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AUGUST 1889.

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## *The Bell of St. Paul's.*

BY WALTER BESANT.

PART II.

CHAPTER XVI.

‘WHEN LOVE WITH UNCONFINED WINGS.’

THE afternoon was as hot as, in August, afternoons can be. In New Thames Street the air was like that of the innermost chamber in the Turkish Bath, where he who dares to sit may have his egg boiled in his hand, and place his toast to be roasted beside him on the seat. It was like the air of a baker's oven. Every brick was a fire brick in a red-hot stove: every stone in the pavement struck out heat in invisible flames that scorched the hands and face. The face of the river trembled with the heat; no boat could live upon it: far away up stream where house-boats are moored, those who were in them pulled down the blinds to shut out the blinding glare of the great heat and lay panting in the shade: those in town wished themselves by the seaside, the breeze fresh and cool fanning their cheeks: those at the seaside sprawled in the shadow of the rocks and longed to be under some tree in a shady wood: those in the woods longed for the cool bank of a trout-stream on the hillside: those who might have sat upon such a bank stayed indoors: the working man longed for the long cool draught from the pewter in the bar: the city clerk in vain hope of a cool retreat tried the handles of the church doors.

It was perhaps the heat of the day which made Althea restless: it was perhaps the close air of the street which made her cheek pale and drew such a dark ring round her eyes and spread a cloud upon her forehead. She was disquieted: her soul was troubled with unrest and discontent. We who wag grey beards forget this disease of youth—the malady of restlessness, the sickness of yearning after the unknown, the oppression and pain of discontent. Althea was like the child who cries because it wants something but knows not what. She sat at her piano and played a little, letting her fingers wander over the keys. The music brought her no tranquillity. Then she exchanged the music-stool for a chair and took up some work. If needlework cannot steady a woman's nerves, nothing can. Watch a woman when, in a state of nervous agitation, she sits down and takes her work, because she can say and do no more. She snatches the stuff: while her lips move with the words which she does not utter, while her cheeks burn and her eyes flash, the needle flies: the sharp tick as it leaves the stuff is like the beat of a quickened pulse: see—she is still in the paroxysm of her rage, her jealousy, her fears—faster—faster flies the needle. Presently it begins to move more slowly: the medicine works: the nerves are beginning to quiet down: little by little the needle resumes its customary pace; the woman smooths the work upon her knee, and wonders at the progress that she has made, forgetting the swiftness with which that little sympathetic instrument responded to her emotion. Now her eyes are steady, her lips are quiet: she lets the work lie idly in her lap: she sits upright, looks round and heaves a sigh. Should her lover or her husband find her now, she will greet him with forgiveness in her face and a kiss upon her lips.

But the needle failed to cure Althea's restlessness. She threw away the work and went to her bookshelves, which were mostly filled with poetry. As becomes a grandchild of the Muse, Althea read a great deal of poetry. She stood awhile trying to remember something that would suit her mood. Books there are with medicine for every mood except one. When the patient suffers from the restlessness of youth, no poet has ever yet been found who can suit that mood or cure that disorder. She took down volume after volume, turned over the leaves awhile, and put it back again. Presently some lines caught her eye—I dare say she had read them a hundred times before, but now they seemed to have new force and a new meaning. They were the lines beginning:—

'When Love with unconfined wings  
 Hovers within my gates :  
 And my divine Althea brings  
 To whisper at the grates :  
 When I lye tangled in her haire  
 And fettered to her eye,  
 The birds that wanton in the aire  
 Know no such liberty.'

The sweet extravagance of the verse: the worship of her own name: the foolishness of any man desiring to lie tangled in a woman's hair: the audacity of comparing his soul, free to love, with the 'enlarged winds that curl the flood:' his contentment—oh, fond young man!—with the freedom of love: struck some chord in her own heart. She read the lines a second and a third time, and sighed as she put the book back in its place. No woman really desires to have her hair tangled about her lover—the thing would actually in itself give her no satisfaction at all: but that he should desire it—that he should find a mysterious and wonderful happiness in a thing so foolish—that he should desire to be fettered to his sweetheart's eye—that he should tremble in her presence, and rejoice only to touch her hand—this is the sweetness and the beauty of love. Therefore, perhaps as one who recognises sweetness and beauty in the abstract, without reference to herself, Althea sighed when she laid down the poet.

It was another poet whom she opened next. This girl read poetry as others read novels. It was the good old fashion until sixty or seventy years ago. Then, no one could ever explain why, poetry came down with a crash and has never, financially or fashionably speaking, got up again. It went out of the daily life. Poets now-a-days have to sing for very small pay. Novels fell, too, with poetry: they lay confounded in one common ruin. But novels got up again. Needs must that we exchange our own lives and troubles, sometimes, for other lives and troubles. Novels arose, learned lessons from the past, reformed, and prospered again. Some time, perhaps, they may fall again, if ever they grow so dull and so conventional as those of the twenties: temporary eclipse from this cause is always possible. Or, if the daily life, the common lot, is filled with new interests: if dull lives are brightened by new excitements and more frequent pleasures, the novel will perhaps no longer be wanted. But that day is distant.

The book which Althea took down next was the first volume

of Tennyson. She read 'Mariana in the South.' It might almost have been written for Mariana on Bank Side. Why not? Shall the Borough contain no romance? Is not the Bank of silver Thames as fit for love and poetry as the parched and arid County of Provence?

'Ah!' she sung, 'to be all alone :  
To live forgotten and die forlorn !'

She sighed again when she put down the book. She looked about her: instead of the high white wall, the green lattice, the dusty vines, the white road, the broad gravel and shallow stretch of the river-bed, the dazzling light, the bare dry hills, the grey olive that never was young, the parched earth of the fields, the mulberry trees stripped of their leaves, on which Mariana looked, she saw the open window, the hot and narrow street, and heard the bustle of the Bank, where the men ran up and down the planks with their barrows and the steamers panted along what they call the Silent Highway.

'Sometimes in the falling day,  
An image seemed to pass the door.'

She looked up involuntarily as if to catch a fleeting glimpse of that image, or to hear a footstep at the door. But she saw no image and heard no footstep. That is, there were, outside, the customary sounds with the sledge hammer of the Boiler Works, banging as vigorously as a cabman swings his arms in cold weather; but the only footstep she heard was that of her father in his study.

The poet, too, was restless: he tossed his long locks behind him: he walked about his room: he fidgetted among his books and with his papers.

But he knew exactly—which Althea did not—what made him restless. He wanted Laurence back. He wanted more praise: to a poet, praise is like sunshine: to all of us it does good unless, which rarely happens, we get too much: but a Poet needs it, as much as he needs food for the body.

He drew from an envelope the famous article of the *Saturday Review*; it was now falling to pieces by being constantly opened and read: he knew it by heart: yet he read it again and again. There was one line in it which seemed to give only qualified praise. This passage gave him so much pain that he had acquired the habit of leaving it out: he skipped it: his eye refused to see it. But the rest—the rest, indeed, was beautiful, true, and yet

so strictly just. When he had read it through he folded it and replaced it carefully in the envelope.

Then his restlessness, soothed for the moment, fell upon him again. His table was covered with his own manuscript poems. Since the arrival of this wonderful young man—like a young man in a fairy story—who had come all the way from Australia solely in order to gaze upon him, he had been continually examining and polishing this precious collection. He was going to publish them, some time, when the polishing process was complete. How much immortal verse is withheld from the world because the poet is never satisfied to let it leave his hands! While he is still correcting and polishing—click! he hears the fatal scissors. Then he drops his papers, and presently unsympathetic executors consign them to the waste paper basket.

Of late years, the poet had written little. Shut up in his little corner of London, removed from the sources of inspiration—for if an artist neither studies man nor nature—if he converse not with gracious lady or simple shepherdess—if he shuts his eyes to the Heavens and the round world and all that therein is, he must surely dry up. Genius must be fed; therefore, Clement Indagine had of late written little: and that little, he could not but own to himself—few poets are so truthful—was but a pale reflection, a thin replica, of what he had written before.

Althea found him wandering as restless as herself among his volumes.

‘My dear,’ he cried, ‘if you had not come to me I must have gone to you.’

‘What is it, dear?’

‘I don’t know. I—I—I want something, Althea.’ He said this quite simply and like a child. He wanted something. He sat down and leaned his head upon his hands.

‘My dear, I cannot sleep at night. In the morning I am lonely. All day I feel like a prisoner—I have been here thirty years and I have never felt like this before.’

‘Perhaps the time has come for you to go back to the world.’

‘Yes—yes, that must be it. Mr. Waller said he would take me—why does he not come back? Where is he, Althea?’

‘Indeed, I do not know.’

‘I thought he had brought me happiness, but he has not. He has brought me nothing but discontent——’

‘Oh! father, not happiness to feel that the people love your verses and repeat them and quote them?’

'I want to hear them repeat the verses—I want to see with my own eyes.'

'Then, dear, let us go back to the world together.'

'You and I together? Why, my dear, the world is for men. You could not sit in the tavern drinking with us. I must go alone—or with Mr. Waller. My dear, the world is not for girls. It is a rude, rough place. They hooted me out of it. Can I tell how they will receive me again?'

'Why,—as if there could be any doubt. Have no fear about that.'

'Oh! It is Mr. Waller that I want. Where is he? Why has he gone away?' He began to pace the room impatiently. 'It is not right for him to leave me so suddenly. Why, if he were to come back and to take me into the world, all would be well. Without him—Is it possible, Althea,' he exclaimed in agitation, 'that a few weeks should make such a difference? Six weeks ago I had never seen him: now I miss him every hour of the day. Never was there such a bright and cheerful lad: he laughed and made us laugh: why, had you ever heard me laugh before? Poor child, it grieves me now to think that there was no laughter in the house until this young Australian brought it. Even Oliver never laughed. And then he was full of sympathy—and he knew how to be respectful in the presence of genius: he ought not to have gone, I say—he ought not—why did he go?'

'I do not know. I only know that he is gone. It was a wonderful change that he brought to us. Now that he has gone it is difficult to settle back to the old tranquillity. But we must remember that after all he was a stranger to us—we were nothing to him: at home he lives in a great house: why should we expect him to continue in this humble place?'

'Because, my dear,' said the poet with confidence, 'he took the greatest possible pleasure in my society. That is, I should say, quite sufficient reason. Poets do not live everywhere. In order to enjoy my conversation, he came here, as you know, nearly every evening: in order to please me and to win some mark of my gratitude, he was good enough to show you, my dear, such attentions as a young man can pay to a young lady: he rowed with you, walked with you, and talked with you. Well, it was kind of him. I thoroughly appreciate his motives. I saw through his thin pretences—to others it might have seemed a desire for your society—I, for my part, know better. Well, he has earned my gratitude: he has won my friendship: he has his reward.'



‘Yes, dear.’ Althea did not dispute this proposition. ‘But he had business of some kind to do here, and when that was done he had to go. Could we expect him to stay on just to please us?’

‘Nay—nay—but to please himself, child—to please himself. You, who have always lived with a poet, do not quite understand how the poetic temperament may strike the imagination of a young man. To please himself.’

‘Perhaps he will come again. He has promised to see us again before he goes home.’

‘Then look at the way of it,’ her father continued, grumbling. ‘He never told us he was going—he just walked out of the house without a word. It was on that evening when you became engaged to Oliver.’

‘Father,’ said Althea quickly. ‘Please understand clearly—I am not engaged to Oliver. I told you at the time—it was only a condition—if I could bring myself to care for him—’

‘But, my dear—we thought—your uncle thinks—we all hoped and believed that this was a figure of speech. We were quite satisfied with the condition. Of course a girl cannot be expected to fall into her lover’s arms.’

‘It is impossible—I thought so then—now I know that it is impossible. Even if he cared for me it would be impossible, father’—she became suddenly resolute in so much that her father was instantly convinced. ‘Never—never—never—would I marry Oliver. The thought of such a thing is horrible.’

‘My dear child:’ he took her hand astonished at her vehemence: ‘my dear, you shall not, unless you please. Let us talk no more about it.’ At another time he would have said a good deal, but for the moment he was full of his own sorrows. The best remedy against grieving over others’ troubles is to have plenty of your own.

‘You were talking of Mr. Waller,’ said Althea.

‘Yes. And I must say, my dear, that I cannot possibly understand his conduct. What makes it the more remarkable is that he had been invited to congratulate us—to share our family joy. So great was the confidence we reposed in him.’

‘To congratulate you?’

‘Why, my dear,’ her father replied in some confusion, ‘we naturally thought—we believed—we hoped, that you were going to make us all happy by accepting Oliver. And your uncle told Mr. Waller in the morning what was going on.’

'Told Mr. Waller? Oh! How could he talk about me in that way?'

'Your uncle was struck—doctors notice things, you know—with a kind of melancholy which seemed to fall suddenly upon the young man. I think something must have happened. He became gloomy and answered in monosyllables. I expected him to call in the afternoon—I had in fact a poem to submit to him. It was one in my Middle style. But he did not come. I wished now that your uncle had pressed him to explain the cause of his gloom.'

'Mr. Waller knew that Oliver——' Althea began with burning cheeks.

'Certainly, my dear. And he was invited to join in congratulations: he came as he had promised: we were all silent and rather anxious, I remember, because, my dear, your future was at stake, and that was cause enough for anxiety—but I could not help observing the young man's changed appearance. He looked haggard—actually white and haggard. He stood at the window and hardly spoke. Something must have happened to him. Perhaps he was ill. However, our thoughts were with Oliver and you——'

'Never mind about Oliver,' said the girl.

'Well—when Oliver threw open the door and told us what had happened—I mean, what he thought had been promised—Mr. Waller without a single word rushed out of the house. Did you not see him? He rushed. He said not one single word—he rushed out of the house. And next day we hear that he is gone. Did you not see him?'

'No, I did not know,' she replied, but in a voice so strange and constrained that her father was startled.

'Why, my dear,' he laid his hand upon hers—'what is the matter?'

'Nothing—nothing—what should there be?' But her looks belied her words. For her cheek was pale and her eyes were dilated as those of one startled by a revelation. Indeed a revelation had come unto her—the sudden perception of so great a thing that it caused these outward signs of inward tumult. A revelation—nothing less. One that would henceforth change all her life and give new colour to the world around her. In her ears, as if to accompany the revelation, were ringing in a voice which she knew and remembered—certain words which she had read an hour ago.

'When Love with unconfined wings  
Hovers within my gates :  
And my divine Althea brings—'

'What is it, dear?' asked her father. 'Why do you look so frightened? What have I said? Believe me, dear, Oliver shall not——'

'Oh, never speak of Oliver again—never again,' she repeated, shuddering. 'I cannot bear to hear his name. No—no——' she looked round as if terrified, 'nothing is the matter—nothing.—It is the hot day and I am restless, and oh! I am so lonely and so friendless—so friendless'—she burst into sobs and tears.

Now this elderly divine Maker had been all his life writing of Love, in praise and worship of Love. Of Love the unconquered, Love the Dominator. Of woman's affection and of man's passion he had been making rhymes for fifty years and more. But it was Love conventional, Love unreal, that he described. Truth to tell, though his words might be as fiery as those of the eighteenth century bards who burned and swooned and flamed in rapture and died in ecstasy, his verse could have moved no one. Also, being a man whose thoughts were chiefly occupied with himself, he never observed the plain and common symptoms of love. You have seen in what a spirit he interpreted the young man's attentions to his daughter. Flavia, who had never written any verses—she had indeed never read any except in a hymn-book—understood these symptoms very well. But the Poet, the Maker of a hundred love-poems, could not discover these symptoms even when they were exhibited under his own Parnassian roof, within an inch of his poetic nose.

'Yes, dear,' he said. 'Hush, do not cry, Althea, my dear, we are lonely and friendless'—the tears stood in his eyes as well. 'We are poor and lonely and friendless. We had one friend and he is gone. Hush, my dear, you tear my heart. We are unhappy, we will go away—somewhere—if there is any money—we will try to forget our friend who brought us joy and left us sorrow. Hush, my dear—my dear.'

He soothed and consoled her in his ignorance. But she left him and went upstairs to her own chamber.

For now she knew. Suddenly the thing that other girls would have known from the very outset, she guessed at last. Other girls talk with each other of love; they hear of engagements and

live in that great human family where there is continual marrying and giving in marriage. Althea read of love, but it was of an abstract thing: she did not connect it with herself. But now she knew that he loved her—he loved her. Oh! she felt his love encompassing her, as with a garment, and that made of crimson velvet set with pearls embroidered with gold and fringed with lace. She shivered, but not with cold, while her lover hung this robe upon her: she blushed beneath the longing of his eyes: the touch of his hands made her tremble: the sound of his voice filled her heart with joy. He loved her.

She knew now—yes, she knew at last—why she was so restless and so unhappy. Like her father she longed for the return of this young man—because he loved her.

She fled to her chamber. Love himself, who does not always show roguish eyes, stood at the gates with sympathetic face: with one hand he shut and barred the door; and then armed with a sword, he stood without, an outer guard or tyler, to slay any who should dare to pry into the secret, sacred mystery of a maiden's heart.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE MOTOR PATH.

MR. MAYES remained in a condition of the strangest bewilderment. Day and night he was tortured with this failure of memory. Never before had he experienced anything like this wonderful forgetfulness. The solid earth sank beneath his steps: the world was going round him: he felt like losing his wits.

He remembered hard: he set himself to remember with all his soul and all his strength: he looked up the office books of the time for anything that might help him to remember: yet he could not recall the witnessing of that will. That it should be anything but a genuine instrument never entered his head: how could anybody write his signature so that he himself would not know it except for his own? The longer he remembered, the less did he succeed.

Then a truly dreadful thought came into his head and would not be dislodged. It has been hinted that Mr. Backler, deceased, suffered in his latter years some loss of the finer faculties,

Elderly gentlemen who take ardent drinks from eleven in the morning till eleven at night often do experience this loss. Mr. Backler, in fact, had softening of the brain : and presented before his death a very mournful spectacle indeed. Now Mr. Mayes could not conceal from himself the fact that he too only sought his bed at night when he could hold no more.

The terror that he was going in the same way became at last intolerable : he could bear it no longer. He was fain to lay his case before a doctor.

The practitioner in whom he confided was a young man newly started in practice, an intelligent person from the London Hospital, who not only possessed enough medical knowledge to pass his examination but also had some tincture of modern science.

'You are suffering,' he said after many questions, the use of the stethoscope, and the examination of the pulse, 'from one of those obscure forms of brain disease which have recently been the subject of special investigation.'

'I thought so,' Mr. Mayes groaned. 'Like Mr. Backler's case.'

'You are lucky,' continued the medical man, 'that science has tackled your disorder.'

'Should I have been a goner?' asked Mr. Mayes, pallid.

'Most certainly you would. Aphasia takes many forms : it is due to many causes : perhaps you have taken too many stimulants : or you have been worked too hard : or you have taken too little exercise. Some men lose the power of speech altogether : others can only say half of what they wish to say : some forget certain things and remember others.'

'That's me,' said Mr. Mayes.

'You remember, I believe, everything of importance except one particular event.'

'The most important thing, pretty well, of any. And I can't remember—try all I know—one single word of it.'

'Exactly.' The young practitioner laughed and rubbed his hands as if this was a branch of business which he really did like. 'Your case grows clearer. Now, Sir, by the aid of a little diagram you will understand exactly what is the matter with you.'

He took paper and pencil and drew a little black circle.

'That's the centre. These lines'—he drew two straight lines radiating from the centre—'represent respectively the sensory path—this with an arrow towards the circle : and the motor path—this one with the arrow from the circle. Your memory carries

the events of the past towards the centre by the sensory path: and they start out again by the motor path. You understand? Very well then. In your case there is a breakdown somewhere about here'—he indicated the probable spot by a black dot. 'The breakdown in fact has caused temporary central paralysis.'

Mr. Mayes groaned. Already he felt himself like Mr. Backler, incapable of speech or thought.

'Fortunately, as I have said, science has conquered the brain. You may therefore get cured. But there is only one man for your case—of course I mean Sir Wigmore Wimpole of Grosvenor Street. You must go to him without delay. I will make an appointment and go with you.'

'Will it—will it—cost much?'

'A good deal I should say,' replied the young man carelessly. 'A man is generally willing to pay in order to save himself from a madhouse or a grave.'—Mr. Mayes groaned. 'But don't be frightened, you can afford it.'

'What will they do to me?'

'You will perhaps be put through a course of the electric battery.'

It sounded terrifying. The patient groaned. But he thought again of Mr. Backler and how that poor sufferer had to give up everything and didn't know what he babbled, and he made up his mind that he would, if possible, avoid that fate.

He went to the great specialist and laid this case before him. It was a curious and interesting case—even unique. Here was a man who had forgotten one thing—only one thing. Why, we forget thousands of things daily: but we do not forget events which at the time are recognised as truly important: we do not forget the signing of a will disposing of an enormous property: it was the interesting feature of the case that the patient had forgotten a thing which in the ordinary course he would never have forgotten.

Nobody doubted this cardinal point. Therefore they resolved to treat the patient for partial central paralysis. First they cut off all his drink—yea, his beer, his whiskey, rum and gin—as for the juice of the grape Mr. Mayes had never gazed upon the cup when it is red. They made him walk swiftly for an hour before breakfast, an hour before dinner, and another before tea: they put him on diet: in mockery they allowed him his pipe—as if a pipe can be taken without a glass! And every day three times for four minutes each time, they treated him to electricity. It



was horrible. They put one pole at the nape of his neck, and the other at the base of the tongue with the intention of loosening the glosso-pharyngeal nerve. The indignity of this treatment Mr. Mayes bore with greater philosophy than the fearful cost of it, which amounted to six guineas a day. As for carrying on business that was next to impossible, because, as all patients use, he continually exercised himself in finding out by trying to remember if he was getting any better.

He was not: after ten days of the treatment he was much thinner, paler of cheek, much more hungry and extremely choleric. But he still remembered nothing of the will. He could stand it no longer—He then arose and solemnly cursed to his face Sir Wigmore Wimpole, M.D., F.R.S., that great and illustrious Physician, and the whole College of Physicians, and even that sweet and beauteous maid Science herself: he attributed to the great specialist the most sordid motives and he left the place. He was no better: the motor path continued to be obstructed, and Mr. Mayes, though he returned to his old habits, fell into a gentle melancholy expecting the fate of Mr. Backler and a softening.

He thought of the will and of the heiress—a girl named Althea, daughter of Clement Indagine. Why, he knew the man by sight. He lived with a doctor close to Bankside: he was a shabby-looking man who wore a broad felt hat and a brown velvet coat and had white locks: that was Clement Indagine. He was brother to that Æneas Indagine, junior clerk at Backler's, who ran away about thirty years ago; they turned out to be nephews of the old man, and nobody ever knew it: and their uncle clapped their father into the Queen's Bench for debt, and let him die there—his own brother-in-law. A hard man, Mr. Norbery: but money must be looked after.

'Chevalier,' he said, 'I've been thinking—about that will, of course.'

'Yes.'

'I must do something: I must give it to a lawyer.'

'You remember signing the will?'

'Why, of course.' The Chevalier looked up from under his thick white eyebrows and Mr. Mayes changed colour and stammered, 'Of course. Didn't I tell you that I remember all about it? What have you got to say to that, eh?'

'Nothing.'

'Very well then. Why the devil shouldn't I remember? Now, then—I've got to do something—the business can't wait

about much longer. There will be a row at the Treasury, I suppose, because you can't expect the Queen to let go of that tremendous heap unless she's obliged. But what can they do?'

'If you remember signing the will, what can they do?'

'Chevalier, you know Mr. Indagine. I've seen you walking with him.'

'I know him very well.'

'What sort of a girl is his daughter—the girl who's going to have the money? Do you know her too?'

'I know her very well.'

'Will she go off her head, do you think, when she hears the news?'

'I should think not.'

'She's to have it when she changes her name. That is when she marries—she's only got four months before her. But perhaps she's got a chap already.'

'Mr. Oliver Luttrell says, I understand, that he is engaged to her.'

'Mr. Oliver Luttrell? Lord! to think of that! Why, it's almost providential! He's to have the money if she doesn't marry. Mr. Oliver Luttrell! Why, he's in my books already for a trifle—a ten pound note it was—he's got a place in that City College. Oliver Luttrell—little black-haired chap—ugly little chap—so he's going to marry her, is he?'

'He says so.'

'Then he'll get a quarter of a million with, or without, a wife, unless she marries someone else in the meantime. Lucky beggar—eh, Chevalier?'

'I believe,' said the Chevalier softly, 'that in the long run he will consider himself fortunate indeed.'

'You haven't let on, outside?'

'I have told no one.'

'Good. Hold your tongue a bit longer. And hark ye, Chevalier, if I can't get something more than the job of managing the estate, I'm hanged if anybody shall. And if I get what I want it shall be the best day's work you ever did to find that Will—remember that now.'

First of all, he thought he ought to call upon Mr. Clement Indagine. Crafty men always like to feel their way carefully.

He did so. He called upon the Poet in the morning, actually disturbing him at his best time. He was taken to the Poet's study where he sat before his table, covered with precious poems in manuscript.

The white-haired bard looked up, astonished. In the presence of so many books—nothing strikes the vulgar mind with more awe than a room filled with books—and that highly superior face which was lifted to greet him, Mr. Mayes felt small.

'I have made bold,' he said, 'to call—to call—' Here the difficulty of opening the subject presented itself for the first time.

'You have come, I suppose, in reference to my works,' said the Poet kindly.

'Works? I didn't know you had any Works,' said Mr. Mayes.

'My poems. If you represent any Firm of Publishers I fear that your visit is premature. My arrangements are not yet decided. My new volume, it is true, is nearly ready, but I must consult with friends before entrusting them to the care of any Firm.'

'Poems?' asked Mr. Mayes, who knew nothing of any muse.

'My Poems,' repeated Mr. Indagine. 'You are, I presume—'

'Lord love you, Mr. Indagine, don't you know me? Boy and man I've been in these parts for forty years and I remember you for thirty, and your brother I remember too.'

'Who are you, Sir?' the poet asked with a sudden change of manner. 'Who are you and what do you want with me? why do you disturb me at this hour?'

'My name is Joseph Mayes—and I am successor to Mr. S. Norbery, Deceased.'

Clement Indagine pushed back his chair. 'I have nothing at all to do with the late Mr. Norbery, or with his affairs,' he said hastily. 'I refuse to talk about Mr. Norbery.'

'Excuse me, Sir. One moment! which you will not regret. You are his nephew, Sir, though that is not generally known. If I had known it, when he died, I should have stepped round in a friendly way to let you know. As it was, you didn't even follow when he was buried, you've never claimed the property, though there was no Will, and you were the heir at law.'

'I have nothing to do with Mr. Norbery, I tell you.'

'Why, Sir, really now—it's only a day or two since I found out that you were his nephew—surely you must have heard that he left no Will—that is to say, that he was thought to have left no Will—and that you were the heir to all of it.'

'I tell you again, Sir, that I have nothing to do with that man's money.'

'A quarter of a million if it is a penny. And yet you never claimed it. Never claimed it. Why there isn't another man in the world—never claimed it! And now the Queen's got it, that's all. I suppose you know that much.'

'Understand me, Sir,' Mr. Indagine rose, tall and commanding, his white locks flowing behind. 'Let there be no misunderstanding possible. Under no circumstances whatever could I step forward to claim that fortune. Never would I acknowledge myself to be the nephew of a man who caused my father—his own brother-in-law—to die in a debtor's prison.'

'Not even if a Will were found leaving it all to you?'

'Under no conceivable circumstances, Sir.'

'A quarter of a million!' Mr. Mayes repeated, feebly.

'I have spoken, Sir. This interview has lasted long enough. Good morning to you.' He turned away and sat down at his table. But Mr. Mayes lingered.

'One moment. Don't be in a hurry—no good to be in a hurry. You've got a daughter, Miss Althea Indagine——'

'What has my daughter got to do with you, Sir?' Mr. Indagine asked fiercely.

'If you will not be rich yourself, you would not mind her being rich, I suppose?'

'What do you mean by that?'

'Suppose—I say, suppose'—here Mr. Mayes tapped his left forefinger with his right forefinger, as he had seen them do it on the stage of the Surrey. 'Suppose there was a Will found after all, and suppose your daughter was to benefit—largely, mind—enormously'—he spread out both his arms with untaught eloquence—'by that Will, you wouldn't—you couldn't—stand in her way.'

Mr. Indagine was not a man of the world, he had no recent knowledge of craft and subtlety, but these qualities were marked so strongly upon the man's face: they lay so open to view in his eyes: they were shown so clearly in his attitude—that a child would have understood them. He sat down and smiled and crossed his legs.

'So,' he said, 'it was not only in order to ask me why I do not claim that fortune that you have come here. What have you to say more?'

'Why,' Mr. Mayes replied hoarsely, 'if such a Will was to be found, and I was to find it, what share should I get out of the proceeds? Mind—the man who found the Will?'

'What share?'

'What commission—if you like it better put that way? I should be content to take ten per cent.—a mere little ten per cent. in a Quarter of a Million—a flea-bite—you wouldn't so much as feel it—ten per cent.'

'Let us speak more plainly. Without any supposes, you mean to tell me that you have discovered a Will by which Mr. Norbery has left his fortune to my daughter. Very well, in the name of my daughter, I tell you that you may tear up that Will.'

'I only said—suppose.'

'And, in the name of my daughter, I tell you that you will receive no commission of ten per cent., or anything else per cent.'

'Very well, gov'nor'—he replied, sullenly. 'When the commission is agreed to, and you've left off talking nonsense, we shall understand one another p'raps.'

'Sir—' Mr. Indagine began wrathfully.

'Stop a minute,' Mr. Mayes interrupted. 'Stop a minute. Don't say what you were going to say. It never does any good to get in a rage. Suppose you and the old man didn't quite hit it off. Bless your soul; I know the story of the Queen's Bench, and what the old man did. He was a hard nut to crack: he really was. But there is the young lady. You wouldn't die and have her poor, would you? From what I know of house property, Sir, speaking respectfully, I shouldn't say yours was worth much. She'll marry, perhaps. All the more reason—'

'She will continue in such a matter to be ruled by me.'

'And she may have children. Would you like to feel that your grandchildren were growing up paupers?'

'Sir,' Mr. Indagine rose and spoke with great dignity. 'One word. Understand me plainly. Never—never with my consent, shall a penny of Mr. Norbery's ill-gotten gains go to enrich my child or my possible grandchildren. Never shall my daughter, if such a Will exists, seek to benefit by it. Never, with my will.'

'It's awkward,' said Mr. Mayes. 'Well—I've said what I came to say. But the young lady's chap will have as big a say as you, Mister, come to her getting married. If you'd like to have another talk, you know where to find me. Successor to S. Norbery, your own uncle. In the old house.'

On leaving the house he did not return to his office but he walked across Southwark Bridge into the City, and directed his

steps towards the laboratory, where the most fortunate of all young fiancés was to be found in the morning.

He did not, as with Mr. Indagine, feel his way. The humblest money-lender would have a better knowledge of mankind. He exposed the whole case with a frankness worthy of the greatest statesman. He put the thing nakedly. *Do ut des*—he would have said, but he had not so much Latin.

'There,' he said, summing up. 'Now you know all, Mr. Luttrell. The Will is in my hands. Nobody knows about it, except myself.' This he said stoutly, such was his faith in the word of the Chevalier. 'And if you and me can't come to terms, nobody shall.'

'This is very amazing,' said Oliver. 'That Mr. Norbery should leave his property to me—unless—but the young lady is engaged to me. This is a most unexpected circumstance.' His cheek burned and he kept his eyes down and fumbled among the papers on the table. His hands trembled too; all those symptoms of agitation are common when one suddenly hears that one has inherited a large fortune. Every one of my readers will recognise the signs from personal experience.

'I'm a man of business, Mr. Luttrell. That's what I am.'

'Surely, surely. But, about the Will. Is it not an extraordinary circumstance that it should have escaped notice until now? Are you quite sure—for instance—that it is a genuine document?'

'Well, I'll swear to the signatures if that is what you mean by genuine.'

'You remember, in fact, signing it?'

'Certainly. Why not? Why shouldn't I remember signing?'

'Why not, indeed?' Oliver looked up smiling softly. 'That settles the thing, even if the Will should be disputed—but if you remember, and since you've got nothing to gain by it——'

'Hold hard, there,' said Mr. Mayes.

'Very well, then, nothing under the provisions of the Will. Whatever private arrangements may be made. You are, therefore, an independent witness.'

'And the sole surviving Trustee.'

'Quite so—the Trustee. I suppose the management of the Estate would give you a vast deal of trouble.'

Mr. Mayes smiled.

'Well, Mr. Luttrell, don't let us beat about the bush. The young lady is engaged to you. If she marries you at once the



money is hers—that is, it's yours—because the Married Woman's Property Act may say what it likes but it can't get rid of the husband. If she doesn't marry you before the end of the year, the money is all yours.'

'Exactly. It is a situation—I confess—which is astounding. Still—the fortune will be as you say, mine, anyway—mine.'

'If I choose to let you have it,' said Mr. Mayes.

'Subject to that correction—no doubt.'

'You will give me an undertaking to make over to me ten per cent. of the whole fortune—whatever it is, as soon as you get it—either for yourself or your wife. Nothing before. I don't ask it. As soon as you get it.'

'Ye—yes,' said Oliver, with the air of one who considers only how to yield gracefully. 'It is a great slice out of the whole: but as otherwise we should get nothing and we are very poor—and—in short, Mr. Mayes, I agree. I will sign such an agreement as soon as you like. Nothing before the estate is mine, or my wife's. Ten per cent. afterwards.'

Mr. Mayes heaved a deep and heartfelt sigh. When the heart is touched such a sigh is very real.

'This will be a good day's work for both of us,' he said. 'When is it going to come off, Mr. Luttrell? When will the knot be tied?'

'The day is not yet fixed. I suppose in three or four months. There is no need to wait, but one must not hurry a young lady.'

'No, I wish it was to-morrow. I wish the bells of St. George's were ringing as they should for such an heiress and I could see you walking up the aisle with her in white.'

Oliver laughed.

'I wish I were taking that little promenade, Mr. Mayes, in such excellent company. However, it is all settled. Well, we may congratulate each other, I think.'

'We may. You will be a rich man and I shall be comfortable—very warm and comfortable. It's only common justice, too. I, who helped the old man to make his money, should, by rights, get some of it. It's only fair.'

'Quite fair, I think, quite fair. Meantime, for a man who is going to be so rich, I am ridiculously poor. You have already advanced me a little loan, Mr. Mayes—ten pounds, for which you are to get fifteen.'

'I'll lend you more,' he broke in eagerly, 'I'll lend you all you want—in reason—on the same terms. A young gentleman

like you, with a quarter of a million coming in, ought not to be hard up for a pound or two.'

'Very well. Make it a hundred,' said Oliver. 'A hundred more, on the same terms. Two hundred if you like. Three hundred, then,' he added, watching the money-lender's face.

Mr. Mayes laughed. This was business worth having. Better and better. Observe that an ordinary money-lender would have hesitated. Young men die as well as old men: marriages are broken off: not even the husband has the disposition of his wife's money: the cup, full of sparkling wine, is sometimes dashed from the lips: nothing human is secure without security: this young gentleman offered no security. Yet where our hopes lie there we most easily deceive ourselves: Mr. Mayes saw his way so clearly to make this prodigious *coup* that he jumped at the smaller offer. There was this difference between Mr. Norbery and his successor, that the former never jumped.

'My dear sir,' he said, 'I have not the money myself,' his predecessor always used that formula. 'But I can get it for you. The want of a little ready money really must not stand in your way—three hundred I think you said. Come over to my place this evening and you shall receive and sign.'

'Harry,' said Oliver somewhat about midnight, 'is it safe? do you think it is quite safe?'

'My dear boy, it is absolutely safe. Borrow all you can get meantime, and we'll go halves. I'm only sorry—I really am—that we had the girl in it at all. Why didn't we put your name all alone? You've done pretty well however. The girl don't like you. What does that matter if there's nobody else in the way? All the better, if she won't marry you. And I think, dear boy, that we really are going to have a fine old time.'

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### FLEET STREET REVISITED.

'But you promised to go back to the world,' Althea insisted, 'you promised Mr. Waller.'

'Yes, yes,' her father replied impatiently. 'But he was to go with me. That was understood. He was to take me. You forget, Althea, that my return to the old haunts may be awkward

to many, and will certainly be an effort to myself. I shall want support. How do I know, for instance, what kind of reception I shall have? I left them amidst their gibes: I go back to them in the triumph of assured success—How will they receive that?’

‘Well but, dear,’ Althea laid her hands upon his shoulders. ‘Consider, it is thirty years ago. You are not old, and you never shall be old, though your hair is white. But consider, thirty years ago. That is a long time. You were only a little over thirty, yourself. And—you have often told me so—you were one of the youngest men of the set.’

‘Yes, they were mostly older than myself. I should like to see them all again—Yes, my dear, they were all older than myself. Dickens was forty-five: Thackeray was about the same age: John Oxenford, Charles Reade, who wrote, I remember, a charming book called “Peg Woffington,” and was an Oxford man; John Forster, Dickens’s friend; Shirley Brooks: Tom Taylor—they were all over forty. William Jerdan was over seventy and so was Leigh Hunt. Monckton Milnes—he was a Yorkshire country gentleman and one saw him seldom—was over fifty: so was Harrison Ainsworth: and Douglas Jerrold was fifty-two or more—I think I heard somewhere or somehow—that he died about that time.’

‘Well, dear, but think. They must now all be over seventy, some of them even eighty. If they are living, they can hardly meet as they used to do when they were younger men. And many of them, in the nature of things, must be dead.’

‘If they are dead they have left successors. The sacred lamp is always handed down.’

‘But not the memory of injustice. Whose was the hand that wrote that cruel article upon your book?’

‘I know not. That is, I suspect—I have always suspected. He used to sit in the corner, silent, and glowered with envious eyes. A small creature who had written poetry and failed.’

‘Was it one of those whom you have mentioned?’

‘Surely not, surely not. They were the leaders in the world of letters; they would scorn an anonymous attack—a stab in the back. Yet their tongues could be bitter.’

‘Then, dear, why are you afraid to go among them?’

‘You don’t understand, Althea. I am not afraid—not the least afraid. Only I feel a little awkwardness about the position of these old friends when they see me back again.’

Althea held her father’s works in the highest possible respect.

But she could not believe that a single venomous attack upon them would be remembered after all these years.

'If I were you,' she said, 'I would go boldly back and take my place among them. They meet in taverns, do they not? A tavern is open to all the world.'

Her father shook his head. With the moral support of his young Australian friend he felt he would have gone anywhere—without him he was afraid. Call him not a coward. The men who sat at supper in the days when suppers were still ordered and eaten; the men of the pen, among whom were sometimes seen the leaders in the literary mill; habitually employed towards each other plainness of speech, frankness, freedom of expression, and, in fact, a license quite fraternal. Those who have read how Douglas Jerrold reduced his opponents to silence understand the colossal impudence which formed the staple wit of these *réunions*. At no time did this poet, even when he was young and fiery, quite appreciate jokes made on his sacred calling. At the age of sixty and after his long seclusion he could not endure even to think of them.

'At what time do they assemble?' asked Althea.

'They generally dine at six, and they may be found at the "Cock," or the "Cheshire Cheese," or the "Rainbow," at any hour between then and midnight. Sometimes there are two or three only: sometimes there are a dozen.'

'Well, dear, let us go, you and I together, not to one of their meetings, but just to see the places where they meet. It was a promise of—of Mr. Waller's—to take me to many places. He has forgotten his promise,' she sighed. 'You and I will go together. First you shall show me your old haunts: that will be a beginning of your return to the world of letters: then we will go to the West End and see the world of fashion. Father, the past is done with. Mr. Waller has killed the past—for me as well as for you. We must make somehow—I know not how—a new beginning.'

Since the remarkable proofs of his great fame the poet had no other desire than to return to the world. Yet the thought had become a bugbear. How should he return? Whither should he go? In which way should he begin? As for money, he had no anxieties. Another volume was nearly ready. Tom Moore got 5,000*l.* for *Lalla Rookh*—why should not he get as much as Tom Moore? As in everything else, the first step was the trouble.

The time was come when he really must go back to the world. He said this to himself every day. Like all self-conscious men

he thought a great deal about the world. It was the world which had driven him into exile: it was the world which he punished by his long silence: the world again, with tears of contrition, was now calling him back and crying for forgiveness: he was going to grant a general amnesty and to bestow upon the pardoned world the priceless gift of another volume. The world—it certainly is always too much with us—is an elastic phrase. It means those whose opinions we are likely to hear: it means either the joyful derision or the green envy of our enemies: either the compassion or the admiration of our friends. To Bismarck it means the whole mass—not so very great after all—of educated humanity: to a young poet it means the little circle of his own acquaintance. But, in his mind's eye that little circle swells and grows ever widening till it reaches the circumference of the round earth and is in diameter nothing less than the great Equator itself.

But the time had now come when he could no longer remain in obscurity. The world recalled him! The *Saturday Review* asked who was Clement Indagine, where he lived and when he died: Fame was flying round the globe, was proclaiming his name and sounding his glory from far Cathay to Eldorado. It was maddening to sit in a corner hidden away and hear nothing of all this racket. Fame never hovers over Bank Side. Besides there is such a deafening noise from the hammer in the Works that one could not hear her trumpet even if it were a steam instrument, Fame's trumpet of the future.

'My dear,' he said fretfully, 'it is intolerable. They talk of me: they read me: they quote me: and I hear nothing of it at all. I might as well be as forgotten and neglected as I thought. What is the worth of success unless it becomes known?'

'Then, father,' said Althea, 'go back.'

But he hesitated. He was afraid.

As for himself, he knew that he was changed. Thirty years ago he resembled the portrait over the mantel-shelf: perhaps not quite so gallant in his bearing: perhaps with not quite such an electric flash in his eye: but a proper young man, slim and tall with waving locks. He was changed, yet he could not choose but think that the other men remained untouched by Time as when he left them. This is our way. Twenty—thirty years pass, it is half a lifetime—nay, for those who work it is three-fourths of a lifetime: we meet again the young fellow from whom we parted laughing, where our ways diverged. Heavens! he is fifty: he is

bald: he is fat: he laughs no longer: he has become stupid. We know that we ourselves have changed; but to think that others should have changed as well!

He consented at length, but with much misgiving, to the compromise proposed. He would go with Althea, and show her the old haunts. If not actually a return to the world, the thing would wear its semblance.

They started—one of them in nervous trepidation—on this eventful expedition, in the morning about noon, the weather being fine and the wind in the South. Bank Side presented no appearance of excitement or even of interest—probably because the papers had not announced the fact.

The Poet was dressed in his brown velvet jacket, now pretty old, and a broad felt hat; with these aids and his long white locks his make-up was picturesque. The girl with him in her light summer frock and hat, who looked as if she had just come up from the country, the air of which must have given her so sweet and fresh a colour, who walked with so firm a step and was so straight and tall, helped to make a striking group of two—Grandfather and Grandchild, no doubt, come up from the country to see the sights of London land.

From St. Paul's to the Tower, Althea knew the City: she knew the winding courts, the little dingy churchyards built round by warehouses, their dead as clean forgotten and out of mind as any poor sailor wrapped in a hammock and dropped into the deep sea: the Churches, each one with its ancient history, hidden away among the back streets—but she knew the City of Sunday, or, at most, of Saturday afternoons. The City in full flow of business she knew not. West of St. Paul's she knew nothing. Fleet Street was in her mind the meeting-place of the poets: the Strand was a noble line of ancient palaces.

In any other place than the City of London, and at any other time than the hours of business, this pair would have been remarkable. At noon, however, there is no time to look at anything—unless it be a horse 'down,' which would draw the eyes of a financier about to net a million. The Emperor of China might walk along Cheapside, splendid in silk and umbrella: or Prince Bismarck, burly, trampling and shoving the lesser folk out of his way, like Pantagruel on his great mare; or the Pope of Rome with his beautiful triple crown; or even Helen of Troy, without exciting any attention, or causing any remark in the hours of business. In the evening, when the merchants are going to their



railway stations, and the clerks are streaming homewards, it is different: then their minds are unoccupied, and their eyes are free to wander: then, a lovely shepherdess walking down Cheapside becomes aware of the great civic heart, how it beats; and of the great civic eyes, how they beam with admiration and praise of beauty.

'Where are we? What has been done here?' said the poet, looking at the great new street called after the Queen. 'I remember a labyrinth of narrow streets—I have wandered among them when I was a boy. Where are they?'

The traveller who returns to his native town after many years, is either struck with the meanness and poverty of the place, or he laments the loss of the old houses, and the erection of the new staring mansions in their place. Mr. Indagine shook his head remembering what had been. Indeed there have been many losses of late years in the City between Mansion House and Blackfriars.

They stood at last on the steps of St. Paul's, and looked down upon the crowd of Ludgate Hill.

'Thus I stood,' said the Poet, 'more than thirty years ago. It was midnight, but the streets were crowded because the City was illuminated for the Peace. More than thirty years ago—I went home to my lodgings—they were in Featherstone Buildings, Holborn—and began the lines—you remember them, Althea—they are in my first style.

'Upon the great Cathedral steps I stood  
Alone amid the mighty throng—'

'I wonder the *Saturday Review* failed to remark those lines. To me they have always seemed to possess a certain delicacy of sentiment—eh?—a subtle fragrance—the thought is suggested—only those of like mind would catch it—there is a whisper in it—a murmur of midnight—something ethereal caught from the moon riding in the heavens and the jewelled sky.'

'I remember them very well,' said Althea. 'They are beautiful lines.'

'My dear,' he said, pressing her arm—'I have one reader at least, who can see and feel the soul of the Poet. Look, what is that dreadful thing they have built across Ludgate Hill? Is it a gate—another gate of Lud, in place of the old one, but lower down?' At that moment a train rumbled slowly over the bridge. 'It is a railway bridge! Most horrible!' He belonged to the

time when it was thought æsthetic to abuse the railway. They descended the steps.

‘Let us pay a visit to the Row,’ he said; ‘it is long since my eyes were gladdened with the sight of the only trade worth attention.’

He led the way through a narrow passage into that remarkable thoroughfare known as Paternoster Row.

‘Ha!’ he said, looking round him with a sigh of satisfaction. ‘This is the finest street in London. I think there cannot be a finer street in the whole world. The books come out of this street—the old books and the new books: the stream that never fails—my dear, I think now that I did wrong when I left the world to live on Bank Side with your uncle—I should have taken a lodging in Little Britain and walked every day in Paternoster Row.’

There were carts in the narrow old street blocking up the road in order to receive and discharge their parcels and bundles: boys carried books on their shoulders: porters wheeled barrows full of books: those who walked in the street seemed to have—but this may be mere fancy—a more thoughtful air—a nobler carriage than those who walked in Cheapside close by.

‘I think I have never told you before, Althea,’ said Mr. Indagine, looking wistfully up and down the street, ‘that I began my active life here. If you write my biography, child, remember that when I left school at fourteen I was fortunate enough to get a place as junior clerk in Paternoster Row among the books which I loved even then—I left the Row when the little property fell in—all that was left—which my father’s creditors could not seize—on which we have lived all these years. Perhaps I should have been a happier man now, had I continued in the House—had I never wooed the Muse. I might have been long since the Head of a Department: a chief clerk: a principal Accountant: perhaps even a partner.’

So, after many years, when the man returned, the first thing he did was to visit the place where he had spent his youth. He always does it.

‘The Chapter Coffee House was still standing in those days,’ he said. ‘Many a chop and cup of coffee have I had there. It ought never to have been closed. It was a national monument. But they shut it up before I went out of the world. Oh! The place is full of history: it is haunted by the poets of the last century. Here was the sign of the Ship and the Black Swan—see, the house still flourishes. And here was formerly the ‘Bible

and Crown,' but they have removed that westwards. The world of books! I used to come here every morning at nine: the evening I spent with my father in the Prison—in the Prison—he paused a moment, 'in the Debtors' Prison,' he repeated with an effort. 'Well—let us forget that time. But the sight of Paternoster Row brings it back. Come, my dear. The years between were forgotten—I was a boy again, happy among the books all day, though I neither wrote them nor read them, and in the evening in the Prison—Come dear, come.'

He was already changed. The memory of the past softened his face: he had lost his fretful look.

He led her down the Row to the end where wooden gates stood at the end of a broad court.

'My dear, it is Amen Corner,' he said. 'Let us look in. I remember coming here day after day, thinking how quiet and happy must be those who lived in this Cloister. To me whose childhood had been spent in a noisy Debtors' Prison, quiet seems the thing most to be desired.' He opened the gate and led the way into the place: there is a row of quiet-looking houses and then one turns into a broad court covered with ground ivy instead of grass, but with a few flower beds and trees and red-gabled buildings with an archway in red brick like a college.

'They have altered the buildings since my time,' he said, 'but they have not destroyed the quiet of the place. There is no other place like it in the City: not even Sion College, or Lord Derby's Palace which they turned into the Herald's College. My dear,' he said, 'it is so long since I remembered the old days—I came here for the quiet, to dream of being a Poet: I sat in the Chapter Coffee House my heart beating only to think that Goldsmith had sat there before me, perhaps on that very bench. And sometimes one saw an author—Alas! one can but once be young. Come, my dear.'

He led her into the narrow street and so to Ludgate Hill where the stream of life runs up and down without cessation.

'Fleet Street at last!' he cried, lifting his head and looking round him. 'We are in Fleet Street! It is too early yet for any of the poets and novelists: yet if we should happen upon any of them—but would they know me? And now my old friends must all be eighty years of age—eighty years of age!' he suddenly realised what this might mean. 'Oh, Althea! Can there be a circle of old, old men—eighty years of age?—sitting and laughing as they used to sit and laugh over punch and port? No—no

—it is impossible.' But he continued to look about him curiously as if it were quite on the cards that he might meet Dickens, Thackeray, and Douglas Jerrold marching arm in arm together, jovial and hearty still, though eighty years of age. 'My dear,' he said, 'this is a street of Taverns, all sacred to the memory of England's Worthies. There are the Cock, the Cheshire Cheese, the Rainbow, the Mitre, Dick's—once there was the Devil as well, but they pulled it down a hundred years ago. Cruel! To destroy the Apollo Chamber, the Kingdom of Ben Jonson! Here we dined and supped and drank and talked. Althea, I am glad we came—I am very glad we came.'

All day long Fleet Street is crowded, and during a good part of the night and very early in the morning it is astir. In the morning and in the evening there is the stream of City men: in the daytime are the journalists, the printers, the sporting men, and at the western end, the barristers. At the dinner hour the printers stand about in crowds: during the afternoon the journalists appear: more men know each other in this, than in any other street of London: it is a clubbable and social street: more men are employed in this street and its courts than in any other: the great Dailies belong to this street: all the country papers have offices here: hundreds of organs, journals, trade circulars, magazines and sheets of all kinds, are published here and printed in the courts that lead out of it. These papers which are always coming out on their appointed day and being distributed with zeal, would by themselves keep the street lively without the aid of the printers. Fourteen thousand busy pens are flying over the paper all day long to supply these hungry sheets which go in white and come out black; and use up every day so many miles of written lines; and keep boiling such a host of deserving pots.

The returned exile looked about him curiously.

'It is more crowded than it was,' he said, 'and there are many changes in the houses. In my time there were none of these great buildings—I wonder if any of my old friends will recognise me, but in this crowd one passes undistinguished. And I see none like them.'

'But there is a terrible crowd,' said Althea. 'These people surely are not all poets and wits.'

'Hardly, my dear. Perhaps it is some special occasion. No, they cannot certainly all be engaged in the pursuit of letters. Yet look, every house seems the office of some paper or magazine. Can the journals have multiplied?'

They were not exactly poets and wits—the gentlemen who crowded together on the pavements, smoking pipes, talking, laughing, or gathering round the sporting papers. They were, however, the gentlemen who print the glorious works of the poets and the wits: and it was their dinner hour, which explained the crowded condition of the street.

And then a very remarkable thing happened. No one could have expected it, and though the memory of it will always be a sweet morsel for the Poet, the adventure itself somewhat disconcerted him at the time. We are so seldom prepared for the unexpected.

They were moving slowly through the crowd, the Poet looking about him to remember the old places which have been so greatly altered in thirty years. The men on the pavement civilly made room for them as they passed and closed in behind them, talking quickly and with every sign of excitement and interest, but paying no attention to this pair, or to any other passengers who did not belong to themselves.

'Althea,' her father whispered with agitation, 'I am recognised! hush, make no sign, let us behave as if we had not heard.'

He raised his head and straightened his back and his face assumed all the solemnity of a conscientious mute.

And then Althea heard from a group on the other side of the street, this remarkable utterance—

'Three to two on the Poet!'

She looked round and observed that although they permitted themselves such freedom of speech concerning the Exile Returned, the speakers who were common-looking men talking together with animation had the politeness to refrain from gazing upon her father. And she marvelled greatly because—how should they know him? 'Three to two on the Poet!—What could that mean? And yet not even to look after him!

At this point the crowd grew thicker, and as the idlers of the dinner-hour passed right and left to let them pass—this pair, so strangely unlike the current stream of Fleet Street people, they stared at them with wondering eyes.

'Althea,' the poet whispered, 'what do they mean? truly, I cannot understand it—How should they know me? Should I take off my hat to them? They mean well. But let us take no notice—that is best. It is pleasant, however, to receive these marks of respect. They would speak to me if they dared. Perhaps if I were to shake hands with one of them—but no—no.'

He stopped at Bolt Court.

'Let us turn down here and escape our admirers,' he said. 'So—they do not come after us. That is polite of them. Do you know, my dear, that I have never before been followed and mobbed? It is a pleasant experience when one feels that it is deserved on the one hand and a sincere expression of admiration on the other. This is Bolt Court, Dr. Johnson lived here—that is the site of his house, it was burned about sixty years ago. And here—here—is the famous 'Cheshire Cheese.' I wonder if there are in it any—but it is too early. They would not begin to assemble before five at earliest. Upstairs there is a room where there has been despatched many a rump and dozen. Let us peep in.'

He pushed open the doors and looked in. A noisy group were gathered about the Bar drinking and talking. They stopped, astonished for a moment, at the sight of the old man and the girl; but only for a moment. Then they went on with their discussion, and one of them smote his left palm with his right fist and cried aloud 'The Poet! The Poet for a pony!'

Mr. Indagine took off his felt hat and bowed low. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'the Poet thanks you,' and retired, leaving the little circle at the Bar in a condition of so much confusion that they were fain to finish their drinks and take one more. Some, indeed, could not get over the thing for the whole day and discussed it at the Bar until the utmost limit of time allowed by the law.

'These gentlemen,' said the cause of their surprise, returning to Fleet Street, 'must be some of the lesser lights. I fear that the habit of drinking, which formerly prevailed too much—I must own that—among the literary brotherhood, has not yet been abandoned. Poor Kit Marlowe lives again in every generation.'

He continued the walk, his chin in the air, his cheek flushed, his eyes bright. He had actually,—a thing he had never expected—received public recognition in the open street! However, he continued as if nothing unusual had occurred, pointing out the glories of the street which are mostly of convivial associations.

'The Mitre,' he said, 'is down that Court. It was Johnson's favourite tavern; that is Groom's, the old coffee house—many a cup of coffee have I had at Groom's. Next to it is the Rainbow, one of the oldest houses in London. Their port used to be worth something—I wonder if there is any of the old stuff left. Dick's is hidden away in that Court opposite; we used to dine at Dick's



a good deal: they charged you eighteenpence, I remember, and you helped yourself off the joint. And here—here—where is it? I can't see it anywhere—can we have passed it?'

'What is it?'

'The Cock, my dear. The most famous tavern of all. Where can it be?'

He retraced his steps to look for it. Alas! The Cock was gone.

'My dear,' he said, 'I fear that there have been more changes than I thought. If the Cock has gone whither do the wits resort? Good Heavens! The Tavern sung by Tennyson! It should be as famous as the Mermaid, or the Devil. Everybody went to the Cock. Every night there was a gathering from dinner at five or six, to supper after the theatre. Where do they go now?'

A boy ran past them with an armful of papers, shouting, 'The Great Fight! Winner! Winner! Winner!'

The people snatching and eagerly tearing them open. And as they read there was a confused murmur—'The Poet! The Poet! The Poet!' And some shouted 'Hooray! The Poet wins!'

'Let us go, Althea,' said the Bard hastily. 'This demonstration is too much.' He took off his hat and walked bare-headed with humid eyes and flushed cheeks, bowing to right and left along the crowd which made way for him. Strange to say, they hardly looked at him. But they murmured or they shouted: they laughed or they groaned: they danced or they hung their heads, and they said, sung, shouted, and whispered, 'The Poet! The Poet wins! The Poet!'

'Why?' asked Althea in the evening. 'Why did they say, "Three to two on the Poet"?'

'I hardly know, my dear. No doubt, you observed that they were mostly people of little culture—it is some street expression, meaning applause or admiration. I remember there was generally some popular cry, the utterance of which was accepted in place of wit. Such for instance as "Who's your hatter?" "All round my hat," "Proceed, Edward," "Jump Jim Crow" or "Pop goes the weasel," "Not for Joe," with others more meaningless still. My dear, in the vulgar speech these phrases mean nothing. It is sufficient for us that they have recognised me and paid me a spontaneous and hearty tribute of admiration. I shall make a poem on this day, I shall call it "Fleet Street revisited." The world shall rejoice at this accidental outburst of gratitude and—and—and love—yes—

my dear, love. It is nothing short of love—and the love of mankind is the Poet's truest crown of glory.'

Strange to say, though the people shouted, they never looked at him. When Althea afterwards remembered this demonstration, it became like some nightmare, to think of those eyes which saw not, those faces which showed not the least interest in her father, while they cried aloud, 'The Poet! The Poet!' And not one or two here and there: not a shout in one corner and another further on: but a continual roar of voices. Some shouted and some growled: some laughed and some groaned: some danced and some hung their heads: some shook hands and some plunged their hands in their pockets. But all of them—all this great crowd that filled Fleet Street from end to end cried, shouted, or growled in every variety of voice and expression 'The Poet! The Poet! The Poet!'

At Chancery Lane they were clear of the mob and Mr. Indagine put on his hat again. But still they were pursued by the cry though it grew fainter and came not west of the Griffin. Indeed along the Strand, as the object of this enthusiasm afterwards remarked, they might have been quite common people, for all the notice that was taken of them.

(To be continued.)

## *The National Sport of Virginia.*

IT is a poor country, in the eyes of the Anglo-Saxon, that has no national sport. When the Pilgrim Fathers landed in America the national sport which they there found was the hunting of the buffalo by the Red Man. It was more than the national sport—it was the staple industry. Some while later the Red Man found the sport more varied. Not only did he hunt the buffalo, but the white man hunted *him*. There was no close time for either Red Man or buffalo; the former is, therefore, greatly reduced in number, and the latter, as if obedient to the law of supply and demand, almost extinct. The national sport of North America is now the hunting of the Almighty Dollar, which does not seem at all likely to become extinct, nor the zest of the pursuit to fail.

Meanwhile, in the Southern States, a different element was introduced by the longer prevalence of slavery. The national sport of the Southern States was, for a while—if we are to believe (which we are not) everything that was said and published of them at the time of the North and South war—hunting the fugitive darkie. But the fugitive darkie—who was much less frequently fugitive, or desirous of being so, than has been represented—had created unto himself, ‘on ole Virginny’s shores’ and in ‘ole Virginny’s’ forests, a national sport. This national sport is still pursued, though bereft, like all the conditions of the patriarchal slavery of Virginia, of much of its olden glory.

But the darkies still sing in their rich, melodious voices—

Oh, let ‘possums and ‘coons to my funeral come,  
For dey always was my pride.

For this is the quarry—the opossum and the racoon. You cannot say ‘possum’ or ‘coon’ to a darkie without making him grin. It is like ‘rats!’ to a terrier.

The ‘coon is the nobler quarry, in a sense—the bigger, the better fighter of ‘de dogs,’ giving the better run; the better furred

animal, the bigger depredator of poultry yards and young Indian corn. But the 'possum is the dearer to darkie folk-lore—with the pouch in which Mrs. 'Possum keeps her babies, with the long prehensile tails with which husband or wife swing themselves to boughs, with their queer tricks of 'playing 'possum,' shamming dead, and grinning consumedly when you tickle them in 'de short ribs.'

In late summer Virginia begins to don her garb of most brilliant splendour. The maple and the shumac stain the green woods with the first flecks of their autumnal scarlet. In the midst of this dawn of autumn colouring I was reluctantly obliged to end my visit, but shortly before I went my hosts said, 'We must show John Bull a 'possum hunt, so he can tell them in the Old Country what our national sport is like.'

'How do you go?' I asked. 'Horseback or on foot?'

'You can ride if you like, John Bull, but you'll find you'll get on a mighty deal better on foot. And you'd best put on your worst clothes, for we have to go slick through the weeds and the creeks and the cornfields. My! If we get on to de ole 'coon we'll have to go all we can to keep up with him.'

'Well, I'm game for it,' I said.

'That's right, then. O Ned,' he said, turning to his young brother, with the peculiar Virginian use of the vocative, 'won't you ride round to ole man Higgins and ask him won't he come on a 'coon hunt to-night? He's gotten the best 'coon dogs you ever will see. A perfectly elegant tree dog he has.'

'Tree dog!' I said. 'Do you mean it climbs?'

'No, he doesn't do that way. He just marks the tree the 'possum's in. You wait—you'll see.'

Ned was already preparing for a start. Some saddles and bridles lay in the porch, baking their dinginess and rustiness in the hot Virginian sun. Some long-tailed horses fed or strayed about among the apple-trees which grew around the house. Gay butterflies danced over the grass, and in the still blue overhead two turkey buzzards floated round in circles, without visible motion of the wings. Without waiting to make a selection, Ned took up the bridle that lay nearest his hand, and, walking out into the sunshine, allowed the same pleasing chance to determine the horse he should put it on. The one nearest happened to be restlessly engrossed with a persistent gadfly. Ned therefore bridled the next and led him up to the porch. There he saddled him, and, jumping on his back, shot his feet into the great wooden

stirrups, and with trousers halfway up to his knees went off at a gallop, while his straw hat beat time with its flapping brim.

We were at the midday meal when Ned returned. He hailed a darkie boy to unsaddle the horse and send him to play with the others. Then he came in and announced: 'Ole man Higgins say no good go 'coon-hunting to-night. Cesar's away over the mountains.'

Great dismay over Cesar's truancy, for Cesar was the celebrated tree dog! (I am not sure if it should be 'Cesar' or 'Seizer'—but prefer the imperial orthography.)

'Well,' said the elder brother, 'I'm determined we'll give John Bull a 'coon hunt to-night—so there! Say, John Bull, won't you ride over with me to Mr. Clarke's this evening, and we'll get him to come along with his dogs? Then we'll get what dogs ole man Higgins has, as well, and we'll see if we can't get up some sort of a hunt.'

'Mr. Clarke's not gotten such good dogs as ole man Higgins,' said Ned. 'He's not gotten a tree dog at all.'

'Well, that's so,' admitted the other. 'But we'll surely catch something—if we're out all night for it.'

'Riding over to Mr. Clarke's in the evening' meant driving over in the afternoon. In Virginia you 'ride' in a buggy. In Virginia—a land of Lotus-eaters otherwise—it is never 'afternoon.' The whole interval from noon to night is called 'evening.'

So after dinner, as we sat smoking in the porch, my host shouted, 'O Hannie.' In response came a black boy sleepily blinking through the splendid sunshine.

'Fix up Hannah in de buggy quick's ever you can. Now, you boy dar, fly 'roun'.' They commonly clip their words, as the darkies do, when they talk to darkies.

Hannie did not fly much, but in course of time appeared driving round a hooded buggy with a small perch behind, to which Hannie transferred himself, accompanying us to open the gates. Betwixt the snake fences, with frightful jolts over stones or into mud-holes, we go, now and again rattling over the loose arrangement of planks which does duty for a bridge over a creek, or floundering through the waters of a creek that is unbridged.

Thus we arrive at length at the abode of Mr. Clarke—a superior white-washed cabin. We find Mr. Clarke at home. He is a small tenant farmer, and has much the look of an agricultural labourer of the Midlands. He is occupied, apparently, in regarding the face of Nature—of which it is well worthy, in all its gorgeous

hues, softening off into the mystical haze which envelops the far Blue Ridge mountains. The patches of maize corn are standing, still green, the height of a man's head, and the scarlet of the shumac brightens here and there the woods.

Mr. Clarke eagerly consents to the 'coon hunt, and treats with some scorn 'Marse George's' lament over the absence of Cesar. We arrange to meet Mr. Clarke with his pack at a point in the woods some three miles from the house, and on our return journey call in upon 'ole man Higgins,' to acquaint him with the place of the meet.

Old man Higgins shows but little enthusiasm. He seems a laconic cynic, and scarcely tries to conceal his contempt of Mr. Clarke's qualities, or of those of his hounds as 'coon hunters. Nevertheless he consents, with the air of making a concession, to favour the hunt with his presence and that of his hounds, always with the exception of the redoubtable Cesar. But he does so under obvious protest, plainly regarding Cesar's assistance at a 'coon hunt of an importance second only to that of one other personage—the 'coon.

After the tea-supper there is a general dispersal of the male members of the household in search of the worst articles of clothing—somebody else's preferably—that can be found. Whilst in process of changing, the booming of a cow's horn breaks upon the still night.

'Who's that, then?' we ask each other. It is early yet, for the sun has not long set, and the fireflies, which the natives less euphoniously call 'lightning-bugs,' are still flickering, like little revolving lights, in the garden. However, the rays of a dim lantern reveal the horn-blower, surrounded by four or five of the black-and-tan foxhounds of the country. None other, in truth, than our friend Mr. Clarke, who, unable to restrain his impatience, has come all the way down to the house instead of going straight to the meet. With him is a young neighbour, Willy Williams by name, to whom I am introduced. He is said to be the keenest hunter of fur or feather in the county. And very keen and businesslike he looks, as lithe as a panther, and carrying in his hand a pair of leggings to put on when we arrive at our starting-point. Such a ragamuffin crew as we look was surely never seen. Mercifully the lantern throws into shadow our most gaping deficiencies. Most of the male darkie servants are gathering round, eager for the hunt.

'Whar's Harris, Ned?' the elder brother asks.



'He can't come till he's gotten the supper things put away,' says Ned. 'I'll wait for him, and we'll catch up on you afterwards,' for Ned and the old house servant have been the closest of friends ever since the former's baby days.

'He's a first-class axe-man, Harris is,' says Ned.

The 'field' is a large one. Four of the house party, besides Ned; then there is Mr. Clarke, and Willy Williams, and an indefinite number of darkies of various sizes. Willy Williams draws a revolver from his pocket and fires it into the air as we leave the house, to proclaim that we are fairly off. This is a little startling, but I know him to be a first-rate shot. He is said to shoot squirrels with his revolver as they run along a bough.

For a mile or two our road runs along the railway track; then we turn up into the woods, and walk up a cart track in silence unbroken, save by the continual 'skreeking' of the katydids in the locust-trees. All of a sudden a 'whoop!' as if all the fiends of Hades were loose, rends the air, and makes the woods echo again. Mr. Clarke is relieving his pent-up excitement in a mouth-filling, blood-curdling yell. It is full of encouragement to his pack, which dashes hither and thither among the crashing brushwood. Then there is silence again, and on and on we plod with a monotony relieved only by frequent plunges into and scrambles out of mud-holes. Mr. Clarke occasionally enlivens us with a Tartarean yell, but the dogs are saying nothing.

All of a sudden there is a tremendous canine discord. I certainly think the game is at last on foot. But no, we are but passing two or three darkie cabins with their little corn-patches about them, and all their cur-dogs are yelping a dire menace—which amounts to nothing more.

The darkies come out; one or two join us, and on we go.

'Now hyar's about whar we should meet ole man Higgins,' I am greatly pleased to hear my host at last say. He has relapsed into the darkie idiom, now he is at the sport dear to the darkie's heart. 'Sound up your horn, Mr. Clarke.'

Mr. Clarke's horn booms into the night. There is no answer.

'I hear some one,' says Willy Williams.

'So do I,' says George; and presently two hounds spring from the darkness, setting up their backs in defiance of Mr. Clarke's pack.

'It's ole man Higgins,' says Willy Williams, recognising the hounds. 'Hyar, Rock. Down, won't you, Savage?'

In another minute old man Higgins appears, in a slouch hat, with a big knife in his belt, and comes up to the party without a word. He gives a grin of welcome to Willy Williams, in whom he recognises a kindred spirit, devoted to the noblest pursuit of man, the chase.

‘Haven’t you cyarried along yo’ axe?’

Old man Higgins says no; so we have to sit down again in the silent darkness and wait while one of the boys is sent to fetch it from old man Higgins’ house, which is luckily close by. Willy Williams has his pockets full of chinkipins (small nuts which grow inside a prickly covering, like chestnuts), which he liberally distributes. Their munching is flavoured by a discussion of the merits of various hounds—notably of the truant Cesar, whose absence is deplored by all except Mr. Clarke, who depreciates him with faint praise.

‘Hyar’s dat boy wid de axe. Hey, Hannie, I done know yo’ no gwine ter stay longer by yo’self in de dark dan you done help.’

So now we are at last really off. Mr. Clarke is giving vent to yells which would seem to be rending his body in agony asunder. Occasionally we hear the dogs brushing near us. Of a sudden there is a yelp, then another, and then a little chorus of music. Mr. Clarke yells more vociferously than ever.

‘Dat dar’s a rabbit!’ says old man Higgins cynically—judging of the quarry by the quality of the canine melody.

‘Is dat a rabbit, Mr. Higgins?’ the boys inquire.

I perceive that old man Higgins is regarded as an oracle: also that he knows the true secret of preserving that reputation—silence.

He pays no attention to the question.

‘It’s a ’possum,’ says Willy Williams.

‘It’s my belief dat’s a ’coon,’ says another.

‘Ef ole Cesar was hyar I’d soon know what he was,’ says the oracle, travelling for once a little beyond his province.

Meanwhile, Mr. Clarke continues to yell wildly. Presently he pushes forward, and we follow under his guidance; for he is master of the ceremonies to-night, and not even old man Higgins—though all the boys refer to him—could assume a vestige of authority without a deadly breach of ’coon-hunting etiquette.

‘How dat ’ar man do yell!’ was the utmost *sotto voce* protest on which he could venture. ‘Yo’ll head off the dogs,’ he said at length. ‘We best wait.’

So all the party halted, except Mr. Clarke, who conspicuously

declined to heed the suggestion, and pushed on alone with his lantern. The chase went merrily on in the dark wood.

Suddenly the experienced ears of all the 'coon hunters caught a different note in the canine music.

'Dat ar's a tree bark,' exclaimed one.

'Treed!' was the monosyllable that sufficed most.

'Let's wait and hear again,' said old man Higgins cautiously.

Again the same note—whereon all the party dashed forward through the thick woods.

'Come on,' said my host. And 'come on' I did—stumbling over logs, catching my feet in brambles, plunging into holes, receiving a stinging facer from a switch released by some one in front—and so we came to where Mr. Clarke was standing, with his lantern raying up towards a tree at whose foot was baying a hound, standing with fore-paws against the trunk, looking up.

'What is it, Mr. Clarke?'

'I think 'tis 'coon.'

'Ole 'coon gwine ter give yo' longer hunt dan dat. Dat's 'possum,' sniffed the old man Higgins oracle.

'Now den, whar's dat axe?' said Willy Williams. 'Harris and Ned no done come yet. Blow yo' horn for dem, Mr. Clarke. Yo' boys, catch up dese dogs.'

So then Mr. Clarke's horn boomed out, and the darkie boys held each a dog, lest the tree should fall on them, and the chips flew merrily as the axe was laid on to the trunk with a will, and I recalled the old saying of 'a 'possum up a gum tree,' though this one was up a locust tree.

Down came the tree with a crash, just as Harris and Ned, who had been answering Mr. Clarke's horn with constant yelling, came on the scene. Then the dogs were let go; we all rushed in, peered about through the foliage of the fallen tree, but not a sight of a living creature could we see.

'I could swear I heard him fall,' said Willy Williams.

'Is he "playing 'possum" under hyar?'

'No, de dogs done find him ef he was.'

'Dar, de dogs is on him! He's off again!' the boys exclaimed as the hounds took up the chorus again and rushed off down through the woods.

'He's no gwine to run far dis time,' said my host as we started off once more in pursuit of the music.

And so it proved, for a very short chase brought us again up to where the quarry had taken refuge, in quite a small tree this time.

'Done got de ole 'possum dis un time,' said all the darkies, fairly dancing with delight, as all, dogs and men, surrounded the sapling, and by the light of the lantern we tried to make out something like a creature's shape up in the tree.

'Let me go up and shake him out,' said Willy Williams.

'Yis,' said old man oracle approvingly. 'Let Marse Willy go up, shake him out.'

Mr. Clarke offered no opposition. So the young man shinned up the slender stem, and shook away. No result!

'He done gone twis' his tail roun' 'bout de bough, I s'pose.'

'Give me up the lantern,' said the climber, reaching a long arm downwards.

'I see him,' he said, handing the lantern back, after a good look. 'He's right up on top.'

Up he went again while we all stood round in breathless excitement, till the sapling began to bend with his weight. More and more it bent, till there was a crash, and down fell the hunter with a thud and a crackling of twigs, for he had brought down a branch with him to the ground. In a moment he was on his feet again, and as the dogs sprang towards him we saw that in one hand he held by the scruff of the neck a little pig-faced creature with snarling jaws, and in the other a branch, round which the creature's tail was tightly twisted.

Then such a yell of delight went up from darkie and white throats alike as if we had captured a white elephant at the very least. What a pandemonium we must have made of those solemn sombre woods, to be sure; and what a hero Willy Williams was in the eyes of all! The 'possum was but about three parts grown, it is true; but it was a feat of clever, plucky huntsmanship that he had done; and what I regarded as no small mercy was that the loaded revolver in his pocket had not gone off in the fall.

However, there we were with our little live 'possum twinkling its eyes and showing its teeth at us—a few more teeth, as it seemed, each time that a dog made a spring up at it. What was to be done with it? The darkies danced around and derided it. But old man Higgins was more silent and more businesslike. He cut down a long stick with his big knife and cleft the end of it. Into the cleft was inserted the end of poor little 'possum's tail. Whereupon he wound the rest of his tail lovingly round the stick and, clasping it round with his little arms, was borne along by Willy Williams—like a captive king in the triumph of a Roman emperor.

After a while, by dint of much blowing of sonorous cow-horn and Tartarean yelling, Mr. Clarke succeeded in distracting the attention of his pack from the captured 'possum, and inducing them to direct their energies to a quest for new quarry. The hounds occasionally struck upon a fresh trail—one of which led us right through a corn-field whose 'shucks,' as we swayed through them, deluged us with dew drippings. Opinions were divided as to whether these diverse trails were 'coon, 'possum, or rabbit; but, as they led to no 'treeings'—to no result beyond much baying of the hounds, blowing of the cow-horn, and yelling of Mr. Clarke—the question of their origin must remain among those many problems which, humanly speaking, are insoluble.

At length hounds and hunters seemed alike wearied out, and a suggestion emanated from the oracle, 'dat we should go up to yon old, disused darkie cabin, dat we should steal some corn by the way, dat we should there light a fire and roast and eat the corn, and dat after a couple of hours of rest we should sally forth again, at which hour de ole 'coon would be likely to be making tracks homeward from his nocturnal business or pleasure.' And the saying of the oracle seemed good in the sleepy and hungry eyes of the hunters.

So up towards the cabin we bent our steps.

'Don't take any of dis hyar corn,' said the oracle. 'Dis hyar is poor man's corn.'

So we went into another field, of a man comparatively opulent, and broke off a great ear, or pod, apiece from the standing corn. Then in the cabin we lighted a fire of dry wood found lying around. The corn was thrown on the fire to cook in its 'shuck,' or outer sheathing. We found some apples on some trees hard by the cabin, and munched them while the corn was cooking. With yells of delight the darkies bent over the fire and pulled out the corn as it seemed sufficiently roasted. Then each, pulling off the shuck of his ear of corn, chawed away at it approvingly. The stick with the 'possum at its top was stuck into a cleft in the logs of the cabin, and the little beast clung there, alternately snarling and looking appealingly from one to the other as if to ask what it had done to merit such treatment. Then Willy Williams produced his revolver. A proposal that the 'possum should be the target was pretty unanimously negatived, and we practised, instead, at an apple stuck into a corner of the logs. Then gradually the men began to fall off to sleep. Willy Williams pillowed his head upon a sleeping hound, which seemed to be

quite agreeable—the two hunting natures being in full accord. And the last thing I remember of the strange scene on which the flickering firelight was expiring was watching Harris telling Ned some of the old darkie folk-lore stories of the animals, and of 'Miss Meadows and de gals,' almost word for word as we read them in the pages of 'Uncle Remus.' 'Brer Rabbit' became, in Harris's mouth, 'de ole Har,' and the affectionate title of 'brer,' accorded to the bear, the terrapin, and the turkey buzzard, was changed by local idiom into 'bo.' In other respects the stories were identical, and Harris told them with much pantomime, imitating the manner in which 'brer Fox,' as 'de ole Har's' riding-hoss, came 'clippity-lippity' down the road.

So I slumbered off, half dreaming of, half hearing, the strange animal-human comedies, until I was awakened with a start by the booming of Mr. Clarke's horn sounding for action. So out we trooped again, stumblingly, stretching our limbs, still half-stiff with sleep, and Mr. Clarke recommenced with renewed vigour the yelling as of disembodied spirits. The hounds, refreshed by their rest, dashed off into the woods, and we followed along a woodland track, with the 'possum borne aloft in our midst.

After a while thus spent in silent hunting on the part of the hounds, of spasmodic, brazen-throated encouragement from Mr. Clarke, there was a yelp, then a second, and a third, and a whole, emphatic, angry canine orchestra—a quickly travelling orchestra this time, too. Away over the brow of the wooded hill it led in an instant.

'Dat's de ole 'coon dis time, sure; now we're gwine to have a hunt, dat's mighty clear,' and with that, Mr. Clarke, old man Higgins, and all of us together, dashed off through the woods at best speed, with no respect for persons this time—now that we were on an undoubted 'coon—not even for oracles. Mr. Clarke, with extraordinary energy, still led the way, and the yelling.

'Say, they haven't lost him!'—this in a voice of deepest despair from Willy Williams as the canine notes were silent a moment.

No, it's all right. The music begins again—they have caught up the trail.

Away we go, clear of the wood now—down over a sloping corn-field, crashing down, I fear, much of the 'poor man's corn,' down into a sort of marshy dingle, then up over the other side, with the perspiration beginning to pour off us, though the night is chilly. We have cut off a corner and are close on the hounds



now; they race along the snake-fence of logs dividing the corn-field from the woodland. As they go they jump up towards the fence now and again.

'He done run along de fence dar,' says the oracle, somewhat breathless. 'Close upon him now!'

But Mr. Clarke is still ahead with the leading hound. Instead of turning into the wood, as we expect, we hear Mr. Clarke's next yell down over the field again.

'He's done gone down de creek. We're gwine ter lose him,' says old man Higgins sorrowfully. He has quite forgotten the language of the white man in the excitement of the chase; and, sure enough, on the banks of the creek we all come to a stand-still. Mr. Clarke, still yelling, is encouraging his dogs into the water. They plunge about in the stream, but make nothing of it. Then it is that we, indeed, know the meaning of despair. Is there then no hope? Yes, indeed, by leading the hounds up and down the stream we may strike off the trail again; but the hope is slender. He may have gone up stream, he may have gone down stream, he may have gone a mile, he may have gone a yard—he may have gone into a musk-rat or other hole in the bank of the creek. There is but one thing of which you may be certain, 'de ole 'coon' will have done just the one thing in all the world which you would least suspect him of thinking of doing. There is no gauging the subtlety of 'de ole 'coon.'

But hark! what is that? Away back, just, as we said, far from where anybody could have reasonably anticipated such a thing, there is a voice of a hound acknowledging the trail. The other canines cock ears, and at the second whimper dash off. Mr. Clarke yells intermittently.

'Back-trail, may be,' observes the oracle.

We listen in cruel suspense for the direction of the music. No. Joy! It is no back-trail. Away it leads in quite a new direction, along the low marshy ground. Oh, luckless 'ole 'coon,' that that vagrant hound should thus by evil fortune have chanced upon your track! Away we go again, floundering heavily through the squashy ground, for half a mile, maybe, when—'Treed! Listen! Yes! Treed! We done got him now, John Bull! Come on, and you shall see.'

'John Bull,' floundering in a deeper mud-hole than usual, is rather late in arriving. But they've got him. Surely there can be no mistake about it this time. Up in one of those low

alders he is, that the dogs are baying around so. Yes, but in which one?

'Dat's de one he's in,' says Mr. Clarke decidedly.

'No, I think he's in that one,' says Willy Williams. 'Anyhow, give me the axe. We'll soon see, if we're going to cut them all down to do it.'

A few strokes bring down the first low alder. No, he is not in that one; and the dogs are still barking furiously and jumping up towards the dark foliage of the trees.

'I'm going to climb up and see if I can see him,' says Williams, commencing the ascent of the sapling. 'I do believe I see him,' he says, as he reaches the first bough.

'Shoot him, den. Shoot him, Marse Willy.'

'Shall I?' says he doubtfully, for there is a certain etiquette about the hunting of the 'coon—that he should be allowed to settle matters between himself and the dogs, without human interference.

'Yes, may's well shoot him. He's done give us more'n enough trouble.' It is the voice of the oracle. That decides 'Marse Willy;' and, taking his revolver out of his pocket, he aims upwards.

'I'm not sure if it is him,' says he doubtfully, lowering the pistol again. 'Throw the light of the lantern higher, Mr. Clarke.'

The next look seems to satisfy him. He says nothing, but takes a quick aim and fires. Then we wait in suspense, expecting the fall of the creature, but nothing happens.

'It isn't him, after all,' says Williams a little sulkily, dropping to the ground again.

'Well, we must just cut all the trees down, then. Hold on to the dogs.'

The axe falls—'Chop! Chop!'—twice, when behold! not from the tree he is hacking at, but from the very next to it, down drops a darkish body with a thud to the ground. We each loose our dog, with a simultaneous yell. They rush in upon what the lantern's gleam reveals to be a 'coon on its back—their fighting position, all claws and teeth. The dogs close upon him in a body. In a body they recoil, as if they had bitten a porcupine. Then two rush in for the second round. There is a snap, a worry, a yell, a scramble, and—who knows how it all happened in the dark? But the 'coon is off again, with the dogs and Mr. Clarke yelling after him like all the fiends; and all 'de ole

'coon' has left behind him is a scratch all down the face of one of the puppies and his eye half torn out.

Away through the marshy ground and the clinging, golden rod-stems again, straight for the creek this time. And what became of him there nobody except those friends at home to whom the 'coon shall relate the story of this night of stirring incident will ever know. For at the creek we lost him, definitely this time. Maybe he swam down a long way before leaving its shelter, or maybe, as with the cunning of sin he was quite capable of doing, he went back to the woods on his own back-trail. At all events he was a bold sportsman, and had given us a good night's hunt, and I, for one, was not at all sorry that he retained his life and his liberty.

By this time the deep darkness of the night was fading, over the Blue Ridge mountains, into a slaty gray. It was the first forewarning of the dawn, which in those regions climbs quickly up the mountains with little interval of twilight or half-light. It was time that every well-conducted 'coon should be in bed. There was no more to be done that night.

The house is four miles away, and long before reaching it we suspect that we are tired, we are certain that we are hungry. Out of the housekeeper's store-room we hunt up some bread and some lovely blackberry jam, which we wash down with draughts of 'sweet' milk. 'And so to bed,' as Mr. Pepys would say, after a night quite different from any of those recorded in his diary, with the sun, just risen clear above the mountains, staring roundly in our faces.

And what of the poor little 'possum all the while? Well, when I awoke, somewhat late in the day, and came downstairs, I found all the members of the household gathered together on the porch, inspecting him. Ned was holding him up at arm's length, by the tip of the tail. The 'possum was working itself upwards to try and get at his hand, but by keeping it gently joggling Ned defeated its efforts. As I appeared he began to do the office of showman for the unenlightened Britisher, and became so engrossed in his natural history oration that he forgot to keep the creature joggling. It clawed hold of the root of its tail with one arm, and, hoisting itself with this, worked its way up, hand over hand, until Ned caught sight of its manœuvres as its nose was just within about an inch of his finger. He dropped it, with a yell, in the midst of screams of laughter from the party gathered on the porch.

And what did the silly little 'possum do then? Make a bolt

of it, as he might well have done? Not a bit of it. To my surprise he just began 'playing 'possum'—that is to say, 'shamming dead.' There he lay, as if lifeless.

'Now,' said Ned, 'keep quiet all, and we'll see him begin to come to life again.'

We were silent and motionless for about a minute; and so was the 'possum. Then he very slowly lifted up his head; looked in one direction out of one cunning little twinkling eye; then turned his head right round and looked in the other direction, still keeping his body perfectly still. Then, seeing no sign of movement or danger, he slowly gathered himself up on his short little legs and made off at a slow, rolling, ungainly trot.

Ned let him go about twenty yards and then started in pursuit. But long before he reached him the 'possum rolled over and lay, deathlike, on the grass.

'Now,' said Ned, 'see him grin when I tickle him.'

So Ned just touched him in the ribs with a little stick, and a shiver went all over his skin, and his lips curled back over his sharp little white teeth in a most unmistakable grin. It was the funniest little comedy imaginable.

I begged hard for the life of our little 'possum, and he was allowed to shuffle off and trot up a neighbouring locust tree, where he sat, wrapt in thought. But an hour or so afterwards I heard a shot, and was told that Ned had been unable to resist the solicitations of his friend Harris, whose darkie soul hungered after the delights of 'possum flesh.

HORACE HUTCHINSON.

## *Shrews.*

**T**AKE almost any district, and you will find certain local surnames common to many families and of widely different fortunes. 'County names' we call them. And could we go far enough back we should trace them all to a common origin; so that those who hold them are, in a wide sense, connections one of another, and form, in short, a clan. And in a general way, wherever we find a given name held by many persons of different classes, we may assume that it is the name of an old family, and the wider the differences the older the family.

And so in biology. Comparing one group of animals with another, we may be led to the same conclusions. We conclude, for example, that the Marsupials are an old group not only because their remains are found in very early formations, but because the group includes so many and so widely differing species. And what is true of the Marsupials is relatively true of the Insectivora.

Although not so ancient as the Marsupials, they too existed very early in the history of the world, and have assumed many and varied forms. Some—the hedgehog, for example—are protected by an armour of sharp prickles. The nose of others has almost grown into a proboscis. Many of them live almost entirely above ground; some swim, some burrow. On the one hand they glide into the Rodents, and some of them from a superficial resemblance are popularly spoken of as rats and mice. But instead of the gnawing, chisel-teeth of these animals, they have many-pointed teeth, specially adapted to crushing the hard wing-cases of beetles and biting up slugs and worms. On the other hand they approach the Carnivora, but the possession of a well-developed collar bone separates them here. The Bats, too, are not far away, being something 'more than kin and less than kind.'

With indeterminate forms all about them, right in the middle of the Insectivora comes the family of Shrews. The shrews as a whole are a 'feeble folk,' and the smallest of all known living mammals is a shrew. Three species of shrew are recognised in Great Britain. They are the Common, the Pigmy, and the Water Shrews.

Over the whole of Europe, from Russia to the Mediterranean, from the Ural Mountains to the Atlantic, our little common shrew is found. It is said to be entirely unknown in Ireland. Perhaps they left the country through a sense of sympathy when St. Patrick banned the moles.

Dead we often see the shrew. Out of the shrubbery slips the tabby kitten and falls to playing on the lawn, patting and rolling between her paws a little ball of brown-black velvet, that squeaks at intervals with the weak voice of a shrew. Something there is about a shrew that no cat or kitten can withstand. So soft are they and so easy to catch, they surely must have been made for playthings. They certainly were not made for food, for on either side they bear a little scented gland, that does not hit the feline taste. But barn-owls eat them; and the kestrel falcon, who brings so many field-mice to her young, as evening comes brings also many a shrew.

Every countryman is familiar with the sight of shrew-mice lying dead on autumn footpaths and by sides of roads. The hot, dry English September weather presses very hardly on this class of animals. Worms retire then a long way below ground, and even the strong mole often cannot follow them in the hard-baked ground, and has to trust to slugs for maintenance. The damp dead leaves of the hedge-bottom, which were once the shrew's best hunting ground, are dry and deserted now—a fatal change of things. Yes, dead we often see the shrew; and picking him up we hold in our hand a little creature of an oddly quaint and old-world appearance, with a coat like velvet, brownish-black above and greyish-white beneath. But the two ends of him strike us most: a long pink-tipped snout, and a blunt four-sided tail.

And if we so seldom see the shrew running about, it is only because through the long summer day he is tucked away in some snug corner—a hole beneath some rotten stub, or down in the dead hedge-bottom. But no sooner do the shadows lengthen out than the tiny creature wakes from sleep and moves away to look for food. And even then so softly does he slip about that only by patient waiting may be seen the shrew.

Halfway up the side of a grass field there lies a little weedy pool encircled by some growth of bramble, thorn, and hazel, that narrows to a point, and in the point a gate; a pleasant place in which to wait and watch. Even in the constant stillness of this country hollow, it seems as if a special silence were made for



sounds of evening. The hum of unseen insect life that filled the noon is hushed, and every sound is now a voice articulate. Clear across from harvest fields come the last good-nights of reapers going home. On the very topmost twig of a growing oak a speckled thrush is singing to the young and crescent moon, and even now in one last most wondrous cadence he closes his serenade and drops on half-shut wings into the copse below. Round about the top of the oak trees flits a large-winged bat; you may hear the snap of his teeth as he takes the moths. In long-drawn lapses comes a deep hum from among the meadow grass, where a big dor beetle is trying to take wing. His wings have grown somewhat stiff, packed deftly away so long under those hard wing-cases, and it takes many a clumsy trial before he is fairly under way and twanging off among the shadows of the trees.

And now beneath the brambles there is just the softest rustle among the dry dead leaves, and a little sibilant sound is heard now here, now there, moving nearer up the point. It is the shrew-mice on the hunt. The young are born in May or June, and there are sometimes seven young ones at a birth. Often a whole family will hunt together, and this evening there are many on the move. But it is impossible to tell the number, so quickly they slip about. Now under the dead leaves, now along a hidden field-mouse run, to reappear in the most unlooked-for places, two or three meeting in the open to examine some small thing of mutual interest nose to nose. It is, believe me, one of the prettiest of dramas, and is enacted every summer night.

I have said the pool is weedy, and it is. But the weed is vernal water starwort, that grows in masses of brightest green. Everywhere the water is clear as crystal. And if you crawl up here on hands and knees somewhere about to-morrow's sunrise, I can promise you another just so dear a sight. For the pool is the haunt of the water-shrew. Not always. Not every year. Sometimes the hazel is so high it shuts out half the sun. But last winter time the underwood was cut, and these next two years the sun shall play upon the pool and light its every depth. And sunlight is the essence of a water-shrew's life. Some creatures, as the badger and the tench, seem to live, but some to revel in existence. And of these latter are the whirligig beetles, the sedge-bird, and the water-shrew. They sing and play away the hours, as if, as bees the flowers of their honey, they could cheat the air of all its oxygen, as if they at least had divined the secret

—the τὸ εὖ ζῆν—of life. See these water-shrews, how they chase one another in the pool. Out of the water their fur is black and soft, but under it a thousand air-bubbles clothe them round till they flash like silver fishes in the sun. In and out of the weed they swim, picking off the fresh-water shrimps from under the leaves. No sea-otter is more at home in the water than they. Yet are their feet not webbed, but only fringed about with stiff white hairs. Instead of swimming with the direct motion of the water-rat, the water-shrew appears to move alternately both its feet on either side. Unlike the common shrew, which rears its young near the surface of the ground, often in the old nest of a field-mouse, the water-shrew nests in holes under the bank. It generally, I think always, appropriates some existing hole, which it no doubt improves to its liking.

The pigmy shrew is said to be uncommon in England, but common in Ireland, where it entirely replaces the common shrew. But I shall say no more about it, as I do not think I know it well.

There is a passage in Gilbert White which gives a quaint account of a superstition which though dead was not forgotten even in his day. The passage is in Letter XXVIII., and it runs thus: 'At the fourth corner of the Plestor, or area, near the church, there stood about twenty years ago a very old, grotesque, hollow pollard-ash, which for ages had been looked on with no small veneration as a shrew-ash. Now a shrew-ash is an ash whose twigs or branches, when gently applied to the limbs of cattle, will immediately relieve the pains which a beast suffers from the running of a shrew-mouse over the part affected; for it is supposed that a shrew-mouse is of so baneful and deleterious a nature, that wherever it creeps over a beast, be it horse, cow, or sheep, the suffering animal is afflicted with cruel anguish, and threatened with the loss of the use of the limb. Against this accident, to which they were continually liable, our provident forefathers always kept a shrew-ash at hand, which, when once medicated, would maintain its virtue for ever. A shrew-ash was made thus: Into the body of the tree a deep hole was bored with an auger, and a poor devoted shrew-mouse was thrust in alive, and plugged in, no doubt with several quaint incantations long since forgotten.'

The country is 'so dull,' is it? They will not find it dull, but full of charm and very wonderful, who will concern themselves to follow even the quiet commonplaces in the life of a little shrew.

AUBYN BATTYE,

### *Only a Joke.*

HE made the last correction in the margin of the long galley of proof, folded it, thrust it into a stamped and directed envelope, then stood up, stretched his arms and expanded his chest, in the manner of a man coming out of a heated room into the fresh clear air. Suddenly his eye lighted on a little packet of manuscripts lying on the table; he pounced upon it almost fiercely, fluttered the leaves, then tore it savagely across and threw it on to the fire. The fire was dull, and scorched and blackened the sheets without burning them, so he caught up a bent and battered poker and, pressing them down into the red glow, held them there until they burst into a flame, lighting up the dark corners of the room which had been only half rendered visible by the light of the green shaded lamp.

It was one of those rooms which the advertisement columns of the daily papers call 'Bed and sitting room, suitable for a single gentleman of quiet habits.' The 'single gentleman' must be a person of simple and singular tastes if he really finds this kind of room 'suitable' to anything but his pocket. The chairs are funereal horsehair, the seat of the 'easy' one being invariably an inclined and slippery plane. The ornaments are always an inkless papier-maché inkstand in the middle of the red-and-black table-cover, and two Parian figures on the mantel-piece covered with gilt eruptions and preserved under glass shades.

Sebastian Lundy had made the best of his room. The Parian ornaments and inkstand had disappeared into a cupboard; the black-and-red table-cloth had given place to a green baize one, on which a practicable inkpot and a heap of papers were now set forth; the mantel-piece was used as a book-shelf, and so was the top of the chest of drawers. They were a mixed lot, those books: mostly divinity of the evangelical kind, with here and there a volume of poetry. Only a few of them were new, and these stood all together at one end of the mantel-piece. They

were 'Literature and Dogma,' 'God and the Bible,' Greg's 'Creed of Christendom,' a translation of the 'Critique of Pure Reason,' and 'Middlemarch.'

When the manuscript had faded away into a grey ash, Sebastian stirred the fire into a blaze, and threw himself into an old and broken American armchair which stood in front of the fire. He clasped his hands behind the back of his head and wrinkled his forehead in a puzzled meditation. He was one of those men of whom people say that they 'look old,' implying thereby that their looks do not speak truly. He had thick, straightish eyebrows, and large, grey, weary-looking eyes, a thin, rather ragged, black moustache, and small black whiskers, with a clean-shaven chin which never looked clean-shaven. He was long and bony, with the sort of bodily angles which soon make new clothes look old. The fire burned through, and fell in with a hollow little crash. He rose and took down 'Middlemarch,' sat down by the lamp, and with elbows on the table began to read. He had not turned one page before a confident tap at the door made him look up. There was a shade of annoyance on his face, but it faded before he opened the door and yielded his hand to the light-hearted hand-shake of the tapper.

'Studious as usual! I'm afraid I'm interrupting you, Lundy.'

'Not at all, not at all. Come in, Fisher. I'm glad to see somebody.'

'Why, what's the matter? Down in the dumps, eh? Indigestion or love, which is it? Eh?'

He had seated himself in the slipper armchair, and thrown one fat leg over the other. He was a stout, well-looking person, with a high colour and a pleasant face.

'Don't chaff, there's a good fellow,' said Lundy; 'I don't feel very gay to-night.'

Fisher had come into the room with a genial and jolly air, but, as the other spoke, his whole expression changed. It became at once serious and sympathetic.

'I'm awfully sorry, old chap. What is it?'

'Well, to tell you the truth, I feel I can't go on with this sort of thing any longer.'

'What sort of thing?' casting his eyes round the room.

Lundy jerked his thumb towards the stamped envelope on the table, and Fisher taking it up read:

'To the Editor of the "Church and People,"'

'Why! what nonsense! You don't mean that! What *are* you going to do then?'

Lundy walked restlessly up and down the room.

'That's just the question,' he said.

Fisher stood up and leaned against the mantel-piece, and looked at the other with a gravely kind expression.

'The fact is,' Lundy went on, 'I feel such a wicked hypocrite. How can I go on writing what I have ceased to really believe?'

'Oh, my dear fellow, but I thought you——'

'Yes, but I don't see these things quite as I did.'

'Well, but even then——'

'Yes, I know what you're going to say—that journalists should have no conscience, and that may be true in politics, but it isn't in religion.'

'Well, but, dear me, how long has this been going on?'

'A great deal longer than it would have gone on with an honest man. It's no use, Fisher; I can't bear it any longer.'

The other shrugged his shoulders, and drew his hand along the backs of Matthew Arnold, Greg, and Kant.

'That's what comes of reading these, I suppose. I told you so; you should have taken my advice. As soon as a man begins muddling himself about "Subject" and "Object" it's all over with him. I never think myself.'

'It's no use. It's too late. You see I've done it. I can't go back and be the same as if I'd read nothing but the "Methodist Times."'

It was Fisher's turn to pace the room.

'It's a pity, Lundy, it's a pity. Nothing pays so well as religion nowadays. And you have quite a special gift that way, they say.'

'Good heavens, Fisher!' Lundy looked straight in the other's eyes. 'You wouldn't wish me——'

'No, no, no, of course not.' Fisher became explanatory. 'I only meant that it was lucky for the people who can believe what they were brought up to believe. You don't suppose I should wish you to do anything you thought wrong,' he ended, unconsciously quoting Joseph Surface.

There was silence for a minute or two. Lundy mechanically filled his pipe, and the other as automatically struck a match and offered it to him.

'Well, but what *are* you going to do?' he repeated, when the same match had served for his own cigar.

'I tell you I don't know. Sweep a crossing, I should think.'

'Why don't you try fiction?' asked Fisher, as who should say, 'why don't you try cod-liver oil?'

'Well, do you know'—a ghost of a blush appeared between Lundy's thin whiskers—'I've thought of that; I've got a trick of noticing, and I believe I could do it.'

'Do it, of course you could do it!' Fisher's face resumed its bright expression. 'You must begin at once.'

'I've only read one novel, you know.'

'So much the better. You'll not crib their ideas.'

'The worst of it is I must read some, or I sha'n't know what kind of a story to make.'

'Oh, plots are simple enough: I could think of a dozen in half an hour.'

The person who does not write fiction always says so, but Lundy did not know this, so he looked at his friend with extreme surprise.

'Why don't you write novels?' he asked after a moment.

'Oh, I can't work them out, you know; I haven't the patience, and besides, I've got into my groove on the *Racehorse*. That's good enough for me. Keeps me in bread and cheese, even in a chop sometimes.'

His fat sides shook in a chuckle.

'Well, if you're so fertile in ideas, give me a few.'

'I don't know that I can exactly pump them up at a moment's notice like this.'

'Well, look in to-morrow night.'

'I can't, my dear boy. I'm off to Paris for the *Racehorse* to-morrow; sha'n't be back for three months. I was coming in to tell you, but seeing you look so down put it out of my head.'

'Well, try and think of one now.'

'What a hurry you're in! You don't want to begin to-night, surely.'

'Well, I don't know.'

The other stroked the back of his well-brushed sleek hair for a moment or two, his face becoming thoughtful the while.

'Well,' he said presently, 'I did have an idea of a story the other day, but I don't know that I've thought it out properly. It would want a lot of filling in.'

Lundy looked up expectant. Fisher knit his brows, hummed, ha'd, and after a preparatory cough or two began his narrative. It was a tale of love and jealousy, not of a very striking or



original kind, but somewhat ingeniously worked out; for the average novel reader it would have been as commonplace as cabbage, and the *finale* as easily discernible from the beginning as St. Paul's Cathedral from the bottom of Ludgate Hill. But before it was half told Lundy was as interested as a child of eight in a fairy tale, or a member of the Society for Psychical Research in a legend of a haunted house. When the end was reached—it ended at an altar and with wedding bells—he threw himself back in his chair, his cheeks flushed, his eyes shining.

'Bravo,' he said, 'that's splendid! You ought to throw up the *Racehorse* and write nothing but fiction; but I don't like the end, it ought to end differently.'

Fisher's face quite fell at the criticism.

'Differently, why?' he asked; 'how else would you have it?'

'Well, you know,' Lundy spoke slowly, 'in real life things don't end happily generally.'

'Oh, but they do in novels—real life be hanged!' exclaimed the other. A remark which proved that he had at least one of the qualifications of a successful novelist.

'Are you quite sure you'll never use that plot?'

'Not I!' with unmistakable sincerity.

'Well, then, do you mind if I do?'

'Of course I don't *mind*, my dear fellow; but, really, it's hardly'—in an embarrassment of apparent modesty—'it's not quite—— I'm sure you'll think of something better. Besides, you're in the blues to-night; you'll think better of your religious work to-morrow. Shall I post this for you?'

He took up the envelope.

'Yes, I suppose it must go in now, but it's the last. Going? Well, good-bye. Thank you so much for your plot.'

'Oh! I'm glad if it amused you. Good-night, old man. I'll look you up directly I come back.'

As Fisher shook hands he added, 'And I say, do think twice before you give up religious essays for fiction. It's a grave step.'

And when he had closed the door he opened it again to say, 'I say, Lundy, I wouldn't use that plot if I were you.'

'Why not?'

'Oh, it's—it's not good enough.'

'All right,' was Lundy's answer, and the door shut out Mr. Fisher.

Sebastian Lundy took out a savings' bank book. The balance

to his credit was about 21*l*. He looked at it, put it away again, and said aloud :

‘That’ll last. I shall work quickly if I work at nothing else. I’ll risk it.’

Then he sat down and began to write. It was about eleven o’clock when he put pen to paper, and at two he flung down the pen on the last sheet of a careful summary of the story his friend had told him. He was used to taking notes of sermons, and this habit served him here. All the scenes were sketched in their original order, and no detail which bore on the story was left out. He went to bed—but not to sleep. The characters of the story passed in procession through his mind. The incidents, conversations, and trains of events which were possible to the development of the plot performed a sort of maddening dance through his tired brain. The cold February dawn was coming over the roofs before he slept at last, heavily and dreamlessly.

At ten he woke in a sort of panic. What was it that he had to do—and early?

He sprang out of bed and was in his bath before he remembered that it was a novel he had to write.

All that day, and for many a day after he wrote and wrote. He wrote all day. He would get up in the night to write; he would take his meals by snatches as he wrote, groping about for the food with his left hand with eyes and pen still on the paper; he wrote as long as eyes and hand would serve, and always it was these that failed him, not the brain. He would sometimes be forced to let the pen fall in the midst of a sentence, though that sentence and its successors only needed writing down; the hand and the eyes would refuse their office, and he would grudgingly take some food or sleep. But with all his work he seemed to himself to make very little progress, for every now and then he tore up whole chapters and re-wrote them with tender care and virile energy.

His religious writings had been popular among editors and the public for the reason that his piety had upon it the unmistakable stamp of truth; his religious fervours were heartfelt, and were of a very different metal from the formal religiosities which pass current in the columns of the pious press. A certain simplicity of mind made it possible to him to write what he felt exactly as he felt it, without the least disguise or undue self-consciousness, and this simplicity now gave to his story an air of reality. He was helped less by his imagination than by his memory, and he

used all its stores without any of those reservations which abort the efforts of novel writers less simple or more sensitive. Being unstuffed with conventional fiction he actually drew conversations from life, his characters spoke in broken sentences, and bad grammar was as common in the mouth of his educated hero as it is on the reader's own refined lips.

Lundy left his letters unanswered—he paid his small bills without any of that methodical attention to detail which had earned him his landlady's unselfish admiration. When he went out, as he now and then forced himself to do, he walked almost blindly, with long strides and a knitted brow that drew unheeded comments—never complimentary—from the passengers in the streets.

His landlady would come up to 'clear away' and find him bending over his manuscript, the untouched chop beside him.

'Now, deary me, sir,' she would say anxiously, 'you're not yourself at all. Why here's these nice pork chops stone-cold—and you not so much as touched 'em. And you as was always partial to a pork chop.'

He would look up helplessly.

'I—I quite forgot the dinner. Never mind—I'll have it cold.'

'Now I'll just warm it up, and you have it 'ot with a little drop of gravy.'

Which she would do; and Lundy, left alone with the chops, would forget their gravied existence, and write on. Then he would suddenly awake to a sense of his responsibilities, and would take the bones of the cold chops in his fingers and eat as he wrote. And all the time he did not know if he was writing ill or well. He only knew the novel was his life.

So February slipped away, and towards the close of March he came in sight of the end. He scratched out less now, and did not tear up at all: practice was making this kind of writing easy to him. And the brain now ran better in harness with the pen.

There remained only half a dozen chapters to write, and here Sebastian Lundy, without hesitation and by a sort of instinct, abandoned the ending of the story as told to him by his friend. That story ended in a union—this in a parting.

As the work had progressed he had gradually identified himself with his hero. By a strange chance some of the events in the story were not unlike the events in his life. For a kingdom he could not have made the romance of this other self, this

brain-brother, end otherwise than as his own had done; for even Sebastian Lundy had had his romance, ending in wedding bells that were not rung for him.

These last chapters were a faithful and unflinching record of certain chapters in his own life; and the writing of them affected him almost as the living of them had done. He grew pale and thin, and the lines in his face deepened.

At last, on a shivery, rainy April day the final words were written. He drew a long breath, but he did not lay down the pen. He took a sheet of note-paper, and wrote a note to the first firm of publishers whose names occurred to him. Then he tied the story up in brown paper, addressed it to the same firm, and carried it and the letter to Paternoster Square.

Then came three weeks of waiting; and what such waiting is those know who have experienced it, and none who have not experienced it can conceive. And Sebastian Lundy's waiting was harder to bear than most men's. He had not a relation in the world, and his only friends had been the worshippers at the little Bethel he had abandoned, and his sporting fellow-lodger Fisher, away in Paris. Probably Fisher had never been so longed for in all his light-hearted existence as Lundy longed for him then. The store of 21*l.* was wofully lessened by now; there was only enough for three more weeks, even with the strictest economy—meat once a day, and no omnibuses.

Why should he take omnibuses? He had nowhere to go. He went for long aimless walks, and came home tired out—more often than not, too tired to sleep. One evening he came back from a twenty-mile tramp, and as he came into his room the dim fire-light showed him something white on the mantel-piece. It must be *the* letter. He had no correspondents now. He stirred the fire till a bright flame leaped up. He tore open the letter. There was no accompanying parcel. He realised that with a sudden swelling of the heart that brought tears into his eyes; he was not very strong now. Then by the firelight he read the letter. It acknowledged the receipt of the novel, 'John Carlton's Trial,' and requested the author to call on the following day at eleven.

It was accepted then! He had had some early experience of rejected manuscripts, and he knew the forms. Joy ran through his veins like a tide—but a tide of peace, not of tumult. The unrest was over now—the immense tension, the sickening alternation of hopes and fears—his book was accepted. The world would read it; the suspense had been hard to bear, but it was over now.

He did not laugh or sing, or express his joy in any of the ways mentioned by the poets, but he took out half a sovereign—there were not many left now—and he went to the foreign restaurant round the corner, and had a good dinner, the first he had had since the beginning of the novel. That night he slept soundly.

The next morning at eleven he was shown into the private room of the head of the firm. Mr. Trevor was an old man, with a short white beard and an extremely unintellectual forehead. He looked up from a letter he was writing as Sebastian entered, and said :—

‘Sit down a moment, please.’ Sebastian sat down; a light of happiness which he hardly tried to conceal shining through his thin face. Before he could speak the publisher went on.

‘I wrote to you, Mr. Lundy, as I thought I should like to see you personally. There is a matter here,’ opening a drawer and pulling out a sheet of foolscap paper, ‘which calls for some little explanation from you.’

At his words, and more at his tone, Sebastian’s blood rushed to his heart, leaving his face white. What! was he to be asked to alter it? To mutilate the darling child of his fancy and his memory? He set his lips together closely, and kept silence.

Mr. Trevor went on.

‘The book’s been read, and my reader reports to me—ah—hum’—he ran his finger down the page—“some literary skill”—“undoubted talent”—no, no—oh, yes—here it is—“the book is a gross and deliberate plagiarism from Miss Braddon’s *Chloe*. The names have been altered, but incident and sequence are mere transcripts from that work. The ending alone has been altered. There are certain superficial differences, but the two books are practically the same. The writer should be”—ah, well’—he stopped.

Before he had finished Sebastian was standing, pale and rigid, grasping the back of a chair. The old man dropped his gold-rimmed eye-glasses and looked up at him sternly.

‘It’s false!’ cried Sebastian in a harsh muffled voice; ‘I’ve never seen the book. I never read any novel but “Middlemarch.”’

The sincerity of him was not to be doubted. It had its effect. Mr. Trevor’s face and tone softened a little.

‘Well, come, Mr. Lundy,’ he said, ‘how did you come by the plot? Did you evolve it out of your inner consciousness? Do

you read reviews, by chance? Did the events happen to any of your friends? Are they a personal experience?’

From the time Sebastian began to write, until this moment, he had absolutely forgotten, in his love for his story, that the plot was not his own.

‘Er—er,’ he stammered, ‘a friend told it me. He told me that he made it up, and that I might use it.’ He passed his hand over his forehead, and looked at it in a dazed way. It was wet with cold sweat. He spoke with difficulty; his mouth was dry and parched. The publisher pushed his chair back, and thrust his hands into his pockets.

‘Well, sir,’ he said, ‘if I were in your shoes I would have a word of a sort with this friend. He’s been having a joke with you.’

‘A joke!’

‘Well, I don’t know that there’s anything more to be said. The reader speaks very well of your literary style. Try again, and keep clear of your friends this time. Good morning. They will give you your manuscript in the office if you ask for it.’

‘I shall not ask for it. Sell it for waste-paper.’

And he went out, with the air and gait of an old man.

Mr. Trevor sat tapping a paper-knife on his desk for fully five minutes. Then he raised his eyebrows and touched his bell. He handed the report to the clerk. ‘Bring me up that manuscript,’ he said.

When the pile of manuscript was brought to him he began to read. That night he took it home with him.

. . . . .

Sebastian made his way into Paternoster Row, went into a shop and bought Miss Braddon’s *Chloe*, and turned into the gardens of St. Paul’s Churchyard. It was a radiant blue April day, and all the benches were filled. He had to walk up and down for ten minutes before he could find an empty seat.

He opened the book with trembling hands, and began to turn the leaves with feverish haste. After half an hour he flung it under the seat with a violence that split the yellow back from top to bottom, and walked, almost ran, out of the enclosure.

Halfway down Ludgate Hill he was stopped by a hand on his shoulder. It was a fellow journalist of Fisher’s whom he had seen at the latter’s rooms once or twice.

‘Why, Mr. Lundy, you’re quite a stranger! What’s the hurry?’



Heard from old Fisher to-day. He's staying on for another six months. But what's the matter, man? Been ill? You look half dead. Come along—let's turn into the Bodega.'

Lundy shook the hand off, and spoke with rigid jaws in the kind of measured way which men use when they have been drinking a little, and wish to hide the fact.

'The last time I saw Mr. Fisher,' he said, 'he told me the plot of a novel; he said he had invented it; he said I might use it. He thought it was a good joke, I suppose. I did use it. It was the first novel I ever wrote. It will be the last. He lied; it was not his.'

And he pushed past the genial journalist, leaving him rooted and gaping on the half-turn towards the Bodega.

. . . . .

In the autumn of that year this same Fleet-streeter, coming into Charing Cross Station, met Mr. Thomas Fisher coming out, with a railway-rug and Bradshaw in one hand, and a Gladstone bag in the other. In the same hand as the Bradshaw was a brown-bound novel.

After the usual banalities Fisher broke out, holding up the book.

'I say; seen this? It's all the go, I'm told. I've just this moment bought it. It's by old Lundy. You remember old Lundy, surely,' seeing a doubtful look come into the other's face. 'You met him in my rooms once or twice, don't you remember? If he makes a good thing out of it he ought to go shares with me, for I gave him all the ideas, though I never thought he'd use them; it was only my joke.'

'Yes,' answered his friend, in a subdued sort of way, 'so he told me.'

'Deuce he did! I should have thought he'd have kept that dark!'

The man looked at him curiously.

'Haven't you heard about Lundy, Fisher?' he asked.

'Heard?—no—what? Have you seen him lately?'

'I met him about eight months ago. He told me you'd played him some trick about that novel; he seemed half daft about it. I didn't much like the look of him when he left me. And next day the poor chap was found cut to pieces on a railway line out Acton way. When the book came out—but how is it you don't know? There's a note by the publishers explaining all

about it, and all the papers say it beats *Chloe* into a cocked hat. Same ideas all better done, you know, and——'

Fisher had stood like one stunned, his fat face livid.

'Good God!' he cried, interrupting the flow of words he did not hear, 'on the railway? You don't mean to say——'

The other shrugged his shoulders.

'They brought it in "Accidental Death,"' he said.

FABIAN BLAND.

## *Seen and Lost.*

WE can imagine what the feelings of a lapidary would be—an enthusiast whose life is given to the study of precious stones, and whose sole delight is in the contemplation of their manifold beauty—if a stranger should come in to him, and, opening his hand, exhibit a new unknown gem, splendid as ruby or as sapphire, yet manifestly no mere variety of any familiar stone, but differing as widely from all others as diamond from opal or cat's-eye; and then, just when he is beginning to rejoice in that strange exquisite loveliness, the hand should close and the stranger, with a mocking smile on his lips, go forth and disappear from sight in the crowd. A feeling such as that would be is not unfrequently experienced by the field naturalist whose favoured lot it is to live in a country not yet 'thoroughly worked out,' with its every wild inhabitant scientifically named, accurately described, and skilfully figured in some colossal monograph. One swift glance of the practised eye, ever eagerly searching for some new thing, and he knows that here at length is a form never previously seen by him; but his joy is perhaps only for a few moments, and the prize is snatched from sight for ever. The lapidary might have some doubts; he might think that the stranger had, after all, only mocked him with the sight of a wonderful artificial gem, and that a close examination would have proved its worthlessness; but the naturalist can have no doubts: if he is an enthusiast, well acquainted with the fauna of his district, and has good eyesight, he knows that there is no mistake; for there it is, the new strange form, photographed by instantaneous process on his mind, and there it will remain, a tantalising image, its sharp lines and fresh colouring unblurred by time.

Walking in some open forest glade, he may look up just in time to see a great strange butterfly—a blue *Morpho*, let us say, wandering in some far country where this angel insect is unknown—passing athwart his vision with careless, buoyant flight,

the most sylph-like thing in nature, and all blue and pure like its ærial home, but with a more delicate and wonderful brilliance in its cerulean colour, giving such unimaginable glory to its broad airy wings; and then, almost before his soul has had time to feel its joy, it may soar away unloitering over the tall trees, to be seen no more.

But the admiration, the delight, and the desire are equally great, and the loss just as keenly felt, whether the strange species seen happens to be one surpassingly beautiful or not. Its newness is to the naturalist its greatest attraction. How beautiful beyond all others seems a certain small unnamed brown bird to my mind! So many years have passed and its image has not yet grown dim; yet I saw it only for a few moments, when it hopped out from the thick foliage and perched within two or three yards of me, not afraid, but only curious; and after peering at me first with one eye and then the other, and wiping its small dagger on a twig, it flew away and was seen no more. For many days I sought for it, and for years waited its reappearance, and it was more to me than ninety and nine birds which I had always known; yet it was very modest, dressed in a brown suit, very pale on the breast and white on the throat, and for distinction a straw-coloured stripe over the eye—that ribbon which Queen Nature bestows on so many of her feathered subjects, in recognition, I suppose, of some small and common kind of merit. If I should meet with it in a collection I should know it again; only, in that case it would look plain and homely to me—this little bird that for a time made all others seem unbeautiful.

Even a richer prize may come in sight for a brief period—one of the nobler mammalians, which are fewer in number, and bound to earth like ourselves, and therefore so much better known than the wandering children of air. In some secluded spot, resting amidst luxuriant herbage or forest undergrowth, a slight rustling makes us start, and, lo! looking at us from the clustering leaves, a strange face; the leaf-like ears erect, the dark eyes round with astonishment, and the sharp black nose twitching and sniffing audibly, to take in the unfamiliar flavour of a human presence from the air, like the pursed-up and smacking lips of a wine-drinker tasting a new vintage. No sooner seen than gone, like a dream, a phantom, the quaint furry face to be thereafter only an image in memory.

Sometimes the prize may be a very rich one, and actually within reach of the hand—challenging the hand, as it were, to

grasp it, and yet presently slip away to be seen no more, although it may be sought for day after day, with a hungry longing comparable to that of some poor tramp who finds a gold doubloon in the forest, and just when he is beginning to realise all that it means to him drops it in the grass and cannot find it again. There is not the faintest motion in the foliage, no rustle of any dry leaf, and yet we know that something has moved—something has come or has gone; and, gazing fixedly at one spot, we suddenly see that it is still there, close to us, the pointed ophidian head and long neck, not drawn back and threatening, but sloping forward, dark and polished as the green and purple weed-stems springing from marshy soil, and with an irregular chain of spots extending down the side. Motionless, too, as the stems it is; but presently the tongue, crimson and black and glistening, darts out and flickers, like a small jet of smoke and flame, and is withdrawn; then the smooth serpent head drops down, and the thing is gone.

There are ophiologists who never tire of telling you that it is the simplest thing in the world to distinguish the venomous from the non-venomous species. Behold, this is a ring-snake, and this is a viper; how can things so manifestly different be confounded? I should like to see one of these clever gentlemen, when sitting amidst the herbage, suddenly discovering a serpent at his side—neither ring-snake nor viper, nor any species known to him in a state of nature or in a glass bottle. A serpent motionless as if cut out of stone, but the lifted head and neck glittering with life and energy. No doubt he would instantly reflect that (out of Australia) the chances are at least five to one in favour of any strange ophidian one may encounter being innocuous; at the same instant he would consider the form and comparative thickness of the tail, or, that being hidden, the shape of the head and neck, and without hesitation put forth his hand and boldly grasp the prize. Harmless snakes seldom show fight, and, in any case, their small teeth inflict a very slight wound.

One of my earliest experiences of seeing and losing relates to a humming-bird—a veritable ‘jewel of ornithology.’ I was only a boy at the time, but already pretty well acquainted with the birds of the district I lived in, near La Plata River, and among them were three species of the humming-bird. One spring day I saw a fourth—a wonderful little thing, only half as big as the smallest of the other three—*Phaithornis splendens*—and scarcely larger than a bumble-bee. I was within three feet of it as it sucked at the flowers, suspended motionless in the air, the wings

appearing formless and mist-like from their rapid vibratory motion, but the rest of the upper plumage was seen distinctly as anything can be seen. The head and neck and upper part of the back were emerald green, with the metallic glitter usually seen in the burnished scale-like feathers of these small birds; the lower half of the back was velvet black; the tail and tail-coverts white as snow. On two other occasions, at intervals of a few days, I saw this brilliant little stranger, always very near, and tried without success to capture it, after which it disappeared from the plantation. Four years later I saw it once again not far from the same place. It was late in summer, and I was out walking on the level plain where the ground was carpeted with short grass, and nothing else grew there except a solitary stunted cardoon thistle-bush with one flower on its central stem above the grey green artichoke-like leaves. The disc of the great thorny blossom was as broad as that of a sunflower, purple in colour, delicately frosted with white; on this flat disc several insects were feeding—flies, fireflies, and small wasps—and I paused for a few minutes in my walk to watch them. Suddenly a small misty object flew swiftly downwards past my face, and paused motionless in the air an inch or two above the rim of the flower. Once more my lost humming-bird, which I remembered so well! The exquisitely graceful form, half circled by the misty moth-like wings, the glittering green and velvet-black mantle, and snow-white tail spread open like a fan—there it hung like a beautiful bird-shaped gem suspended by an invisible gossamer thread. One—two—three moments past, while I gazed, trembling with rapturous excitement, and then, before I had time to collect my faculties and make a forlorn attempt to capture it with my hat, away it flew, gliding so swiftly on the air that form and colour were instantly lost, and in appearance it was only an obscure grey line traced rapidly along the low sky and fading quickly out of sight. And that was the last I ever saw of it.

The case of this small 'winged gem,' still wandering nameless in the wilds, reminds me of yet another bird seen and lost, also remarkable for its diminutive size. For years I looked for it, and when the wished opportunity came, and it was in my power to secure it, I refrained; and Fate punished me by never permitting me to see it again. On several occasions while riding on the pampas I had caught glimpses of this minute bird flitting up mothlike, with uncertain tremulous flight, and again dipping into the weeds, tall grass, or thistles. Its plumage was yellowish in



hue, like sere dead herbage, and its extremely slender body looked longer and slimmer than it was, owing to the great length of its tail, or of the two middle tail-feathers. I knew that it was a *Synallaxis*—a genus of small birds of the South American family *Dendrocolaptidæ*, which contains about two hundred and thirty species already described. A numerous family of inconspicuous birds, dull-looking in their homely brown colours, and without a song among them. The loss of this small bird might then be thought a trivial matter, especially when it is known that every year adds to the long list of species. But it is not so, for these are wise little birds, more interesting—I had almost said more beautiful—in their wisdom, or wisdom-simulating instincts, than the quatzel in its resplendent green, or the cock-of-the-rock in its vivid scarlet plumage. In nest-making they show the utmost ingenuity, and do not, like the members of some other families and orders—pigeons and humming-birds, for instance—follow one plan or style, but their architecture exhibits endless variety. They excavate deep tunnels in the solid earth, feeble folk as they are, and others rear solid clay structures that no egg-stealer can enter and no tempest overthrow. The stick nests they build are in most cases domed, with the entrance designed to keep out all enemies. Some are gigantic structures, larger than an eagle would require to breed in, with a long winding passage and secret chamber for the eggs and young; and in size they vary from these huge fabrics to dainty little cradles, no bigger than a wren's nest, suspended basket-wise from slender reeds and twigs. As to the forms of the nests, they are spherical, oblong, oval, flask-shaped, fruit and stem-shaped, and teapot-shaped, with the spout for entrance. Wrens and mocking-birds have melody for their chief attraction, and the name of each kind is, to our minds, also the name of a certain kind of sweet music; we think of swifts and swallows in connection with the mysterious migratory instinct; and humming-birds have a glittering mantle, and the miraculous motions necessary to display its ever-changing iridescent beauty. In like manner, the homely *Dendrocolaptidæ* possess the genius for building, and an account of one of these small birds without its nest would be like a biography of Sir Christopher Wren that made no mention of his works.

One morning in the month of October, the great breeding-time for birds in the Southern Hemisphere, while cautiously picking my way through a bed of cardoon bushes, the mysterious little creature flitted up and perched among the clustering leaves

quite near to me. It uttered a feeble grasshopper-like chirp; and then a second individual, smaller, paler-coloured, and if possible shyer than the first, showed itself for two or three seconds, after which both birds dived once more into concealment. How glad I was to see them! for here they were, male and female, in a suitable spot in my own fields, where they evidently meant to breed. Every day after that I paid them one cautious visit, and by waiting from five to fifteen minutes, standing motionless among the thistles, I always succeeded in getting them to show themselves for a few moments. I could easily have secured them then, but my wish was to discover their nesting habits; and after watching for some days I was rewarded by finding their nest; then for three days more I watched it slowly progressing towards completion, and each time I approached it one of the small birds would flit out to vanish into the herbage. The structure was about six inches long, and not more than two inches in diameter, and was placed horizontally on a broad stiff cardoon leaf, sheltered by other leaves above. It was made of the finest dry grass loosely woven, and formed a simple perfectly straight tube, open at both ends. The aperture was so small that I could only insert my little finger, and the bird could not, of course, have turned round in so narrow a passage, and so always went in at one end and left by the other. On visiting the spot on the fourth day I found, to my intense chagrin, that the delicate fabric had been broken and thrown down by some animal; also, that the birds had utterly vanished—for I sought them in vain, both there and in every weedy and thistly spot in the neighbourhood. The bird without the nest had seemed a useless thing to possess; now, for all my pains, I had only a wisp of fine dry grass in my hand, and no bird. The shy, modest little creature, dwelling violet-like amidst clustering leaves, and even when showing itself still 'half-hidden from the eye,' was thereafter to be only a tantalising image in memory. Still, my case was not so hopeless as that of the imagined lapidary; for however rare a species may be, and near to its final extinction, there must always be many individuals existing, and I was cheered by the thought that I might yet meet with one at some future time. And, even if this particular species was not to gladden my sight again, there were others, scores and hundreds more, and at any moment I might expect to see one shining, a living gem, on Nature's open extended palm.

Sometimes it has happened that an animal would have been overlooked or passed by with scant notice, to be forgotten, perhaps,

but for some singular action or habit which has instantly given it a strange importance, and made its-possession desirable.

I was once engaged in the arduous and monotonous task of driving a large number of sheep a distance of two hundred and fifty miles, in excessively hot weather, when sheep prefer standing still to travelling. Five or six gauchos were with me, and we were on the southern pampas of Buenos Ayres, near to a long precipitous stony sierra which rose to a height of five or six hundred feet above the plain. Who that has travelled for eighteen days on a dead level in a broiling sun can resist a hill? That sierra was more sublime to us than Conondagua, than Illimani.

Leaving the sheep, I rode to it with three of the men; and after securing our horses on the lower slope we began our laborious ascent. Now the gaucho when taken from his horse, on which he lives like a kind of parasite, is a very slow-moving creature, and I soon left my friends far behind. Coming to a place where ferns and flowering herbage grew thick, I began to hear all about me sounds of a character utterly unlike any natural sounds I was acquainted with—innumerable low clear voices tinkling or pealing like minute sweet-toned, resonant bells—for the sounds were purely metallic and perfectly bell-like. I was completely ringed round with the mysterious music, and as I walked it rose and sank rhythmically, keeping time to my steps. I stood still, and immediately the sounds ceased. I took a step forwards, and again the fairy-bells were set ringing, as if at each step my foot touched a central meeting-point of a thousand radiating threads, each thread attached to a peal of little bells hanging concealed among the herbage. I waited for my companions, and called their attention to the phenomenon, and to them also it was a thing strange and perplexing. 'It is the bell-snake!' cried one excitedly. This is the rattle-snake; but although at that time I had no experience of this reptile, I knew that he was wrong. Yet how natural the mistake! The Spanish name of 'bell-snake' had made him imagine that the whirring sound of the vibrating rattles, resembling muffled cicada music, is really bell-like in character. Eventually we discovered that the sound was made by grasshoppers; but they were seen only to be lost, for I could not capture one, so excessively shy and cunning had the perpetual ringing of their own little tocsins made them. And presently I had to return to my muttons; and afterwards there was no opportunity of revisiting the spot to observe so singular a habit again and

collect specimens. It was a very slender grasshopper, about an inch and a half long, of a uniform, tawny, protective colour—the colour of an old dead leaf. It also possessed a protective habit common to most grasshoppers, of embracing a slender vertical stem with its four fine front legs, and moving cunningly round so as to keep the stem always in front of it to screen itself from sight. Only other grasshoppers are silent when alarmed, and the silence and masking action are related, and together prevent the insect from being detected. But this particular species, or race, or colony, living on the sides of the isolated sierra, had acquired a contrary habit, resembling a habit of gregarious birds and mammals. For this informing sound (unless it mimicked some *warning-sound*, as of a rattlesnake, which it didn't) could not possibly be beneficial to individuals living alone, as grasshoppers generally do, but, on the contrary, only detrimental; and such a habit was therefore purely for the public good, and could only have arisen in a species that always lived in communities.

On another occasion, in the middle of the hot season, I was travelling alone across-country in a locality which was new to me, a few leagues east of La Plata River, in its widest part. About eleven o'clock in the morning I came to a low-lying level plain where the close-cropped grass was vivid green, although elsewhere all over the country the vegetation was scorched and dead, and dry as ashes. The ground being so favourable, I crossed this low plain at a swinging gallop, and in about thirty minutes' time. In that half-hour I saw a vast number of snakes, all of one kind, and a species new to me; but my anxiety to reach my destination before the oppressive heat of the afternoon made me hurry on. So numerous were the snakes in that green place that frequently I had as many as a dozen in sight at one time. It looked to me like a coronella—harmless colubrine snakes—but was more than twice as large as either of the two species of that genus I was already familiar with. In size they varied greatly, ranging from two to fully five feet in length, and the colour was dull yellow or tan, slightly lined and mottled with shades of brown. Among dead or partially withered grass and herbage they would have been undistinguishable at even a very short distance, but on the vivid green turf they were strangely conspicuous, some being plainly visible forty or fifty yards away; and not one was seen coiled up. They were all lying motionless, stretched out full length, and looking like dark yellow or tan-coloured ribbons, thrown on to the grass. It was most unusual to see so many

snakes together, although not surprising in the circumstances. The December heats had dried up all the watercourses and killed the vegetation, and made the earth hard and harsh as burnt bricks; and at such times snakes, especially the more active non-venomous kinds, will travel long distances, in their slow way, in search of water. Those I saw during my ride had probably been attracted by the moisture from a large area of country; and although there was no water the soft fresh grass must have been grateful to them. Snakes are seen coiled up when they are at home; when travelling and far afield, they lie as a rule extended full length, even when resting—and they are generally resting. Pausing at length, before quitting this green plain, to give my horses a minute's rest, I got off and approached a large snake; but when I was quite twelve yards from it, it lifted its head, and, turning deliberately round, came rather swiftly at me. I retreated, and it followed, until, springing on to my horse, I left it, greatly surprised at its action, and beginning to think that it must be venomous. As I rode on the feeling of surprise increased, conquering haste; and in the end, seeing more snakes, I dismounted and approached the largest, when exactly the same thing occurred again, the snake rousing itself and coming angrily at me when I was still (considering the dull specific character of the deadliest kinds) at an absurd distance from it. Again and again I repeated the experiment, with the same result. And at length I stunned one with a blow of my whip to examine its mouth, but found no poison-fangs in it.

I then resumed my journey, expecting to meet with more snakes of the same kind at my destination; but there were none, and very soon business called me to a distant place, and I never met with this species afterwards. But when I rode away from that green spot, and was once more on the higher, desolate, wind-swept plain surrounding it—a rustling sea of giant thistles, still erect, although dead, and red as rust, and filling the hot blue sky with silvery down—it was with a very strange feeling. The change from the green and living to the dead and dry and dusty was so great! There seemed to be something mysterious, extra-natural, in that low-level plain, so green and fresh and snaky, where my horse's hoofs had made no sound—a place where no man dwelt, and no cattle pastured, and no wild bird folded its wing. And the serpents there were not like others—the mechanical coiled-up thing we know, a mere bone-and-muscle man-trap, set by the elements, to spring and strike when trodden on: but these had a high intelligence, a lofty spirit, and were filled with a noble rage

and astonishment that any other kind of creature, even a man, should venture there to disturb their sacred peace. It was a fancy, born of that sense of mystery which the unknown and the unusual in nature wakes in us—an obsolescent feeling that still links us to the savage. But the simple fact was wonderful enough, and that has been set down simply and apart from all fancies. If the reader happens not to be a naturalist, it is right to tell him that a naturalist cannot exaggerate consciously; and if he be capable of unconscious exaggeration, then he is no naturalist. He should hasten 'to join the innumerable caravan that moves' to the fantastic realms of romance. Looking at the simple fact scientifically, it was a case of mimicry—the harmless snake mimicking the fierce threatening gestures and actions proper to some deadly kind. Only with this difference: the venomous snake, of all deadly things in nature, is the slowest to resentment, the most reluctant to enter into a quarrel; whereas in this species angry demonstrations were made when the intruder was yet far off, and before he had shown any hostile intentions.

My last case—the last, that is, of the few I have selected—relates to a singular variation in the human species. On this occasion I was again travelling alone in a strange district on the southern frontier of Buenos Ayres. On a bitterly cold mid-winter day, shortly before noon, I arrived, stiff and tired, at one of those pilgrims' rests on the pampas—a wayside *pulperia*, or public house, where the traveller can procure anything he may require or desire, from a tumbler of Brazilian rum to make glad his heart, to a poncho, or cloak of blue cloth with fluffy scarlet lining, to keep him warm o' nights; and, to speed him on his way, a pair of cast-iron spurs weighing six pounds avoirdupois, with rowels eight inches in diameter, manufactured in this island for the use of barbarous men beyond the sea. The wretched mud-and-grass building was surrounded by a foss crossed by a plank draw-bridge; outside of the enclosure twelve or fourteen saddled horses were standing, and from the loud noise of talk and laughter in the bar I conjectured that a goodly company of rough frontiersmen were already making merry at that early hour. It was necessary for me to go in among them to see the proprietor of the place and ask permission to visit his kitchen in order to make myself a 'tin of coffee,' that being the refreshment I felt inclined for. When I went in and made my salutation, one man wheeled round square before me, stared straight into my eyes, and in an exceedingly high-pitched reedy or screechy voice and a sing-



song tone returned my 'good morning,' and bade me call for the liquor I loved best at his expense. I declined with thanks, and in accordance with gaucho etiquette added that I was prepared to pay for his liquor. It was then for him to say that he had already been served and so let the matter drop, but he did not do so: he screamed out in his wild animal voice that he would take gin. I paid for his drink, and would, I think, have felt greatly surprised at his strange insolent behaviour, so unlike that of the usually courteous gaucho, but this thing affected me not at all, so profoundly had his singular appearance and voice astonished me; and for the rest of the time I remained in the place I continued to watch him narrowly. Professor Huxley has somewhere said, 'A variation frequently occurs, but those who notice it take no care about noting down the particulars.' That is not a failing of mine, and this is what I noted down while the man's appearance was still fresh in memory. He was about five feet eleven inches in height—very tall for a gaucho—straight and athletic, with exceedingly broad shoulders, which made his round head look small; long arms and huge hands. The round flat face, coarse black hair, swarthy reddish colour, and smooth hairless cheeks seemed to show that he had more Indian than Spanish blood in him, while his round black eyes were even more like those of a rapacious animal in expression than in the pure-blooded Indian. He also had the Indian or half-breed's moustache, when that natural ornament is permitted to grow, and which is composed of thick bristles standing out like a cat's whiskers. The mouth was the marvellous feature, for it was twice the size of an average mouth, and the two lips were alike in thickness. This mouth did not smile, but snarled, both when he spoke and when he should have smiled; and when he snarled the whole of his teeth and a part of the gums were displayed. The teeth were not as in other human beings—incisors, canines, and molars: they were all exactly alike, above and below, each tooth a gleaming white triangle, broad at the gum where it touched its companion teeth, and with a point sharp as the sharpest-pointed dagger. They were like the teeth of a shark or crocodile. I noticed that when he showed them, which was very often, they were not set together as in dogs, weasels, and other savage snarling animals, but apart, showing the whole terrible serration in the huge red mouth.

After getting his gin he joined in the boisterous conversation with the others, and this gave me an opportunity of studying his

face for several minutes, all the time with a curious feeling that I had put myself into a cage with a savage animal of horrible aspect, whose instincts were utterly unknown to me, and were probably not very pleasant. It was interesting to note that whenever one of the others addressed him directly, or turned to him when speaking, it was with a curious expression, not of fear, but partly amusement and partly something else which I could not fathom. Now, one might think that this was natural enough purely on account of the man's extraordinary appearance. I do not think that a sufficient explanation; for however strange a man's appearance may be, his intimate friends and associates soon lose all sense of wonder at his strangeness, and even forget that he is unlike others. My belief is that this curiosity, or whatever it was they showed in their faces, was due to something in his character—a mental strangeness, showing itself at unexpected times, and which might flash out at any moment to amuse or astonish them. There was certainly a correspondence between the snarling action of the mouth and the dangerous form of the teeth, perfect as that in any snarling animals; and such animals, it should be remembered, snarl not only when angry and threatening, but in their playful moods as well. Other and more important correspondences or correlations might have existed; and the voice was certainly unlike any human voice I have ever heard, whether in white, red, or black man. But the time I had for observation was short, the conversation revealed nothing further, and by-and-by I went away in search of the odorous kitchen, where there would be hot water for coffee, or at all events cold water and a kettle, and materials for making a fire—to wit, bones of dead cattle, 'buffalo chips,' and rancid fat.

I have never been worried with the wish or ambition to be a head-hunter in the Dyak sense, but on this one occasion I did wish that it had been possible, without violating any law, or doing anything to a fellow-creature which I should not like done to myself, to have obtained possession of this man's head, with its set of unique and terrible teeth. For how, in the name of Evolution, did he come by them, and by other physical peculiarities—the snarling habit and that high-pitched animal voice, for instance—which made him a being different from others—one separate and far apart? Was he, so admirably formed, so complete and well-balanced, merely a freak of nature, to use an old-fashioned phrase—a sport, or spontaneous individual variation—an experiment for a new human type, imagined by Nature in some

past period, inconceivably long ago, but which she had only now, too late, found time to carry out? Or rather was he, like that little hairy maiden exhibited not long ago in London, a reproduction of the past, the mystery called reversion—a something in the life of a species like memory in the life of an individual, the memory which suddenly brings back to the old man's mind the image of his childhood? For no dream-monster in human form ever appeared to me with so strange and terrible a face; and this was no dream but sober fact, for I saw and spoke with this man; and unless cold steel has given him his quietus, or his own horse has crushed him, or a mad bull gored him—all natural forms of death in that wild land—he is probably still living and in the prime of life, and perhaps at this very moment drinking gin at some astonished traveller's expense at that very bar where I met him. The old Palæolithic man, judging from the few remains we have of him, must have had an unspeakably savage and, to our way of thinking, repulsive and horrible aspect, with his villainous low receding forehead, broad nose, great projecting upper jaw, and retreating chin; to meet such a man face to face in Piccadilly would frighten a nervous person of the present time. But his teeth were not unlike our own, only very much larger and more powerful, and well adapted to their work of masticating the flesh, underdone and possibly raw, of mammoth and rhinoceros. If, then, this living man recalls a type of the past, it is of a remoter past, a more primitive man, the volume of whose history is missing from the geological record. To speculate on such a subject seems idle and useless; and when I coveted possession of that head it was not because I thought that it might lead to any fresh discovery. A lower motive inspired the feeling. I wished for it only that I might bring it over the sea, to drop it like a new apple of discord, suited to the spirit of the times, among the anthropologists and evolutionists generally of this old and learned world. Inscribed, of course, 'To the most learned,' but giving no locality and no particulars. I wished to do that for the pleasure—not a very noble kind of pleasure, I allow—of witnessing from some safe hiding-place the stupendous strife that would have ensued—a battle more furious, lasting, and fatal to many a brave knight of biology, than was ever yet fought over any bone or bony fragment or fabric ever picked up, including the celebrated skeleton of the Neanderthal.

W. H. HUDSON.

## *Old College Days in Calcutta.*

THE old College of Haileybury in England was only the stepping-stone to the College of Fort William in Calcutta, in which the young civilians attached to the Bengal Presidency were required to qualify themselves for the public service in India by a further study of the native languages. The College of Fort William was established by the great Proconsul, the Marquis Wellesley, at the beginning of the present century. He housed it in a spacious range of pillared and porticoed edifices known until lately as Writers' Buildings, close to the site of the famous Black Hole of Calcutta. He endowed the college to the best of his official power with professorships and with prizes. The young writers were encouraged to believe that on their conduct, during their probation as students in the College of Fort William, the success of their career in the public service would depend.

But though the institution was excellent in theory, it failed in practice. Jeshurun had waxed fat and he kicked. Let it be understood that each student who was expected to submit himself to the pupillar state in the College of Fort William, was a young man receiving about four hundred pounds a year from the Treasury, with unlimited credit in the shops of Calcutta, and with a tribe of native money-lenders, each eager to inscribe a new client's name in his books. Even the Government allowed each student in the college to borrow four hundred pounds from it, in the hope that by doing this it would anticipate and outbid the native money-lenders. The result may be easily imagined. Extravagance took every form; and it became almost the rule for each student to get a lakh of rupees (10,000*l.*) in debt, before he passed out of college.

No wonder that reforms were soon introduced. The students were removed from their rooms in Writers' Buildings, and all that remained of the college was an examination hall, a principal, and two professors, with a large staff of Moonshees and Pundits to

teach the languages to the young writers. It would be useless to describe the several changes that were made from time to time. I will only try to give some account of the college as it existed in 1844, when I went out to India to join the Bengal Civil Service.

The young civilians destined for Bengal had to find their own way to Calcutta. The overland route was then a novelty, and most of my contemporaries went round the Cape in a sailing-vessel. I and some others took the overland route, and I never regretted it. For it seemed to me that by going overland we were never so completely severed from England as those were who went round the Cape. My idea was that we could have found our way back to England like the children in the fairy tale, by the pebbles or crumbs that we had dropped. Our journey to Calcutta was accomplished in about eight weeks, which was good time in those days; and when we arrived there we were welcomed as bringing the latest news from England with us, whilst we had to wait for nearly three months before our friends who had voyaged round the Cape put in their appearance.

On reaching Calcutta we reported ourselves to the secretary to the College of Fort William, and were enrolled as students. The secretary, who was also a professor, put us through a brief examination to find out usually how little we knew, but there were instances on record where a student was found qualified at once to pass at least in one language. A Moonshee or Pundit was then assigned to each of us to prepare us for the regular monthly examination, at which every student was expected to show some progress. There were also special examinations for men who went up for prizes and honours; and the secretary was supposed to keep a sort of general supervision over the young men, and no one could leave Calcutta without his permission.

Most of us on our arrival were hospitably received by friends. But this only lasted a short time, and then we set up for ourselves in chummeries. Sometimes a man filled a vacancy in an existing chummery. For myself and three others it was settled that we should form a fresh chummery of our own, and we hired a large empty house in Chowringhee, with a good compound and extensive stabling, and furnished our abode in the manner suitable to our social position. For it must be understood that the young civilians, who numbered about twenty in each year in Calcutta, were regarded as an important section of the community. They were the salt of fashionable society. They had the latest

ideas and the last new fashions from England. The ball of fortune was at their feet, and any one of them might eventually rise to the highest appointments in the service of Government. Each young man had an income of about 400 rupees a month, and unlimited credit. He found that he was regarded as a prize in the matrimonial market, 'three hundred pounds a year, dead or alive,' being his well-known proverbial appraisement. Even if he died his widow would get 300% a year from the Civil Fund, to which he was bound to subscribe.

Four of us set up housekeeping together. We kept something like open house. At breakfast, at lunch, and at dinner we expected friends to drop in uninvited: and the Khansamah was under an engagement to provide enough for ten persons at every meal. Occasionally we gave grand dinner parties, inviting the rich merchants, the regimental officers, the high civilian officials, and others whose hospitality we had enjoyed. I have seen whist played in our house by some of our eminent guests, where many thousands of rupees changed hands in a night, at gold mohur points with heavy bets. We ourselves abstained from such high play, but many an evening ended in a round game of cards with some small gambling. We seldom made a very late night of it, for we usually wanted to be up at an early hour in the morning.

The fact is that we thought a great deal of our horses and our morning rides, and, as most people know, the time for riding in India in the hot season is rather before than after sunrise. We each of us kept two horses and a buggy. Some of us had more than two horses, and we piqued ourselves on turning out in good style, both for a morning gallop round the race-course, and also of an evening among the ladies in their carriages at the band stand. Although we had good horses, we prudently abstained from joining in the regular race meetings, in which animals of a much higher stamp were engaged. We occasionally made matches between our horses, and the young civilians' hurdle race was an annual event in society. We used occasionally to go out with the hounds which were kept to hunt jackals. But it was doubtful if the game was worth the candle; for the hounds usually met at a distance of seven or eight miles from Calcutta, a little before sunrise, so that there was a long drive in the dark, and sometimes our syces did not take the horses to the right place. More than once, however, after a ball and late supper we went home and changed our evening dress for breeches and top-boots, and started on a long drive before daylight to meet the hounds.



Of course, being inexperienced, we were liable to be 'stuck' in our horse-dealing. There was one beautiful Arab, which passed from hand to hand several times among my companions in college. It had been trained for racing. This was in fact the cause of its being sold for a price much less than its original value. Its mouth had been ruined in training; and though it went quietly enough on the road, the moment that it got on the race-course, or on the Maidaun, it was off like a shot, and no one could hold it. It was said that it had killed one of its former owners, by running against one of the mile posts on the race-course; but that was before my time. At last one of my friends put it in his buggy, and drove it regularly. But one day, after a big dinner at the Bengal Club, my friend's buggy and horse were missing. The syce had probably gone to sleep, or something had frightened the horse, for it had bolted out of the club compound, and nothing could be heard of it until the next morning, when the horse and the buggy were found in one of the tanks or reservoirs on the Maidaun. The horse was dead.

But I must not forget that we were not merely owners of horses, but students or undergraduates of the College of Fort William, preparing to pass the prescribed examination in two of the native languages. A period of two years was fixed as the term within which this must be done, or the student would forfeit his appointment and be sent back to England. To each of us a Moonshee or Pundit was assigned from the college free of charge. These gentlemen were Government-paid servants, and none of them would talk English, though some of them had a slight smattering of it. The Moonshees who taught us Persian or Hindustani were usually Mahomedan gentlemen with grey beards and huge turbans, some of them magnificently robed, and nearly all of them addicted to snuff. The Pundits, who instructed us in Bengali and Sanskrit, were Hindoos of high caste, and of much reputed learning in their own religion and philosophy; but their garments were scanty, and almost indecent, being chiefly made of fine white muslin. Their heads were bare, and shaven, save as to one small scalp-lock; whilst they decorated their foreheads and noses with those marks of sacred clay which are almost an offence to an inexperienced Englishman. I regret to state that we did not appreciate or venerate our teachers. We were rather afraid of the Moonshees at first, as they looked so imposing. As to the Pundits, they probably despised and disliked us as much as we objected to them. They usually turned up at our house between ten and eleven, and

were kept waiting until it was our pleasure to read with them. But many a day and oft when the arrival of the Moonshee was announced, he was summarily told that he might go away, and he departed with very little reluctance.

But our behaviour was entirely different to two, if not three, of the teachers of languages, who understood English well, and knew also how to teach the native languages. Raj Chunder and Harry Mohun knew all the college languages as well as English, and their services were in great demand. Out of the twenty students in college, at least six employed Raj Chunder, and six engaged Harry Mohun, whilst the third man, whose name I have forgotten, got a few pupils. Raj Chunder was my coach, and I was entitled to a sixth part of his time during the day of six hours, for he was not so imprudent as to overwork himself. The difficulty was to get a good hour with him. There was always much competition for the morning hour from 7 to 8, but from 11 to 12 was the most coveted period, and some men paid a little extra to get it. His ordinary charge was thirty rupees a month. He was an excellent teacher, and he knew all the little tricks and dodges for cramming a student up to the point just sufficient for a pass; whilst for those who read for honours he was always eager to assist them in acquiring a thorough knowledge of the books and the written and conversational work.

The honours and prizes in the college were numerous. A gold medal was given to any man who passed his two languages in a stated time. By way of honours there was first an examination in each language for high proficiency with a prize of 800 rupees attached to it; and next there was a higher standard, called a degree of honour, with 1,600 rupees reward. But I regret to say that the Government acted meanly in this matter, for the man who gained a degree of honour and claimed his 1,600 rupees learnt to his dismay that the 800 rupees he had received for high proficiency counted as part of the 1,600. I only tried for one degree of honour. The books for the high proficiency standard were comparatively easy and few. For the higher standard or degree of honour in Bengali we were expected to know the whole of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, besides some tough prose works. I confess that I did not read through the whole of those great, but sadly overrated, poems, but it was necessary to read a good part of them, so as to become familiar with their style and tenor.

In the examination for honours, as well as for an ordinary

pass, there was supposed to be a certain amount of intrigue. If a student read for honours it was said that he must keep on good terms with his college Moonshee or Pundit, because they were somehow or other connected with the Moonshee or Pundit who sat by the side of the college examiners, and an unfriendly suggestion from their lips might be fatal. I do not remember to have perceived any sort of intrigue in this quarter in the honour examinations. But the case was different where a young man had been idle, and was in a state of desperation about passing. The test was in reading and writing, so that each student was obliged to be able to read and to write the vernacular character for himself. But it is much easier to read a passage of a book which has been well studied, than to be put on at hazard; and so it came to pass that, owing to some mysterious underground influence, the examiner's book would open, or be opened for him, at a particular page which the candidate had carefully studied beforehand! With the written composition a different course was adopted. The examiners had a stock of old papers, which had been in use for years, and it was curious how our Moonshees could guess which old paper was likely to be set at each examination. They had copies of these old papers, and the student was primed and prepared accordingly. If any *contretemps* occurred, and the expected paper was not given out, there was still a remedy. Some student, who did not want to pass, went promptly out of the examination room, taking a copy of the paper with him. Outside he met one of the Moonshees, who quickly translated it into the vernacular; and then the translation was artfully taken into the examination room by a punkah coolie, who went to relieve his weary brother in pulling the punkah. By a little manœuvring the anxious candidate possessed himself of it, and in due course copied it and showed it up to the examiner. Of course these stratagems were only needed by a few desperately idle men, who would have found it really easier and cheaper to try and pass fairly like the rest of their brethren.

During our life in college we had the enjoyment of the best society that Calcutta could afford. Lord Ellenborough, who was Governor-General, was rather hard on some young civilians, but he was personally very civil to me at some of the Government House entertainments. The Deputy Governor of Bengal patronised all of us, and, being President of the Asiatic Society, he liked to enrol us as members, for which, to our disgust, we had to pay 200 rupees each. The Judges of the High Court, with

Sir Lawrence Peel at their head, exercised unbounded hospitality to us and to the military cadets alike. It recalls too tender memories to think of some of the great houses, where there were young and charming daughters. There was one young lady whose bright eyes had, to my own knowledge, slain several young civilians, one after the other, though she did not marry any of them. I lately heard her story told: that her college admirers numbered twenty, and that she amused herself by asking each of them privately to attend a ball, wearing a blue rosette in her honour; but this did not happen in my day. At length the time came when we were tired of study, and the college examiners reported us as duly qualified for the public service. Then came the painful parting from old companions—for we all knew that henceforth hundreds or thousands of miles might separate us, and that it was a great chance that we might never meet again. There were farewell dinners, and farewell suppers, and every sort of affectionate demonstration and entertainment before the final parting came. I shall never forget the long procession of buggies, with their kindly occupants, who came to see me start in a house-boat on a solitary expedition through the Sunderbuns to a distant station in Eastern Bengal, when I bade adieu to the College of Fort William for ever.

C. T. BUCKLAND.

## *Mrs. Fenton : A Sketch.*

BY W. E. NORRIS.

### CHAPTER I.

IN a gloomy, spacious bedroom of a gloomy old house at Oxford an old man lay dying. There could be no doubt as to the fact that he was dying: that same morning the doctor had whispered to the housekeeper that it was now only a question of days, perhaps even of hours; nor was he himself ignorant of his condition, for at the very beginning of his short, sharp illness he had observed that he would not get over it. Yet any one, looking at his hard, stern, handsome face, might have found it difficult to believe that he was really near his end. It betrayed few symptoms of suffering or exhaustion, and it was the face of a man who never gives in. Not by any means the typical British bulldog countenance, but rather one of a kind which is more commonly seen north than south of the Tweed. The high, narrow forehead, the bushy white eyebrows, the thin lips, the long, square chin—all these made up a whole which, if not attractive, was at least free from any element of weakness. His eyes—those terrible grey eyes with which, all his life long, he had been wont to stare down those who came into contact with him—were closed now; but one could guess what they must be like, and perhaps it was not very strange that the possessor of such a face should, at this hour of extremity, be utterly alone, save for the old housekeeper who was sitting by his bedside and who glanced furtively at him from time to time, without daring to ask whether he wanted anything.

In fact, the Dean of St. Cyprian's, though a personage in the University and one whose name was tolerably well known outside University circles, by reason of his great reputation for scholarship and on account of certain learned works which he had published, was probably as friendless and lonely a man as could have been found in all England. His near relations, it is true, were

dead and gone ; but if they had been still living it would have made no difference, for he had quarrelled with them all. He had quarrelled with his only brother ; years ago he had quarrelled mortally and finally with his only child, who had run away from his house to marry her music-master ; he had quarrelled—not quite finally, to be sure, because that would have been too inconvenient, still pretty sharply and continuously, with every dignitary in Oxford, except with the Master of All Saints ; and he would certainly have quarrelled with him too had it not been a thing beyond the power of human achievement to quarrel with dear old Dr. Drysdale. And so now he lay grimly and silently waiting for death, with only his housekeeper to bear him company ; and she scarcely counted.

It was evening—a bitter, stormy March evening—and he had not addressed a word to her since midday, merely signing to her every now and again to give him the weak brandy-and-water or the beef-tea which the doctor had ordered. The poor woman had sat up with him for two nights and was almost worn out ; yet she did not venture to leave the room without permission or to suggest that one of the other servants might take her place for a time. She was wondering whether any very awful consequences would ensue if she were to indulge in forty winks, when a cautious tap summoned her to the door. There was a brief whispered consultation, and she returned to the bedside.

‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ said she, ‘Mr. Breffit have arrived.’

The Dean opened his eyes. ‘Let him come in, then,’ he answered, in a deep, husky voice.

Mr. Breffit, the lawyer, came in : a brisk, middle-aged man with a rosy face, made rosier than usual by the east wind. ‘Sorry to find you so poorly, Mr. Dean,’ he began in a cheerful voice ; but the old man stared at him, and the remarks which he had been about to make upon the inclemency of the weather remained unuttered.

Mr. Breffit, like the rest of the world, was afraid of the Dean of St. Cyprian’s. However, it does not do for a solicitor to look frightened ; so presently he resumed : ‘I have lost no time in obeying your summons, you see.’

‘You would have neglected your duty if you had lost time,’ said the Dean ; ‘there is no time to be lost. Mrs. Simpson, you may leave us. I sent for you, Mr. Breffit, because I wish to make a fresh will. You will find writing materials on the table. Sit down, if you please.’



Mr. Breffit had no very lengthy task to perform. Lawyers, as a rule, do not much relish drawing up the concise, intelligible testaments which are more in favour nowadays than they used to be; but what are you to do when you have to deal with an opinionated and peremptory client, who knows his own mind and will tolerate no superfluous verbiage? In less than a quarter of an hour the dying man had revoked all previous wills made by him (there had been a good many such), and had disposed of his realty and personalty after a fashion which seemed likely to be final.

When the butler and the footman had been summoned to witness their master's signature, and when Mr. Breffit was once more left alone with his client, he lingered, as if he had some observation to make.

'Well,' said the Dean sharply, 'what is it? You think I have acted unfairly perhaps?'

'Oh, no,' answered the lawyer; 'no, I don't know that anybody could call it exactly unfair—and, after all, it will come to the same thing, most likely. It isn't quite—quite what was expected, of course.'

'I am not answerable for anybody's expectations,' said the old man, 'nor can I pretend to sympathise with anybody's disappointment. Expectations are frequently unreasonable and, according to my experience, are seldom fulfilled. I may say that my own expectations have been strictly reasonable; yet they have not been fulfilled. However, I am not concerned to defend myself. If I were, I might, with some show of plausibility, claim to have done an act of tardy justice.'

The lawyer looked down and smiled slightly, but made no rejoinder.

'Good-bye, Mr. Breffit,' said the Dean presently; 'perhaps you will be so good as to touch the bell as you pass. Thank you.'

The lawyer accepted his dismissal without a word, beyond a muttered 'Good-bye, Mr. Dean.' A living dog is better than a dead lion; but the old lion was not dead yet, and while he still breathed he continued to inspire inferior beings with the awe which they had always felt for him.

On the staircase Mr. Breffit recovered himself and laughed. 'Tardy justice, indeed! Well, if it's justice it's certainly tardy; but, taking everything into consideration, it doesn't altogether realise my idea of justice. The chances are, however, that the woman died long ago. We should have heard of her before now

if she had been alive, you may depend upon it.' Then he betook himself to the oak-panelled dining-room and had a very good dinner, doing full justice to the Dean's old port, before he returned to London.

While the lawyer was thus fortifying himself against cold and fatigue, a visitor called to inquire, and, strange to say, this visitor was presently shown up into the Dean's bedroom. He was a tall, lean old man, with a stooping figure, a bald head, and a kindly, wrinkled face.

'Well, Drysdale,' said the Dean, as he entered, 'so you have come to see the last of me.'

The Master of All Saints took his old friend's hand and looked down at him sadly. 'I hope not, Musgrave,' said he; 'I think not. It seems impossible that you should be taken before me—with your splendid constitution, too! You have not to me at all the appearance of—of being in danger.'

'You would argue with a stone wall, Drysdale,' returned the other. 'I have no strength left for controversy, but in twenty-four hours or so you will have to admit yourself in the wrong. Take a chair, Drysdale; you are the last man whom I shall talk to in this world, and I don't suppose that I shall be able to talk to you very long.' After a pause of a few seconds he resumed: 'Do you remember my daughter Laura?'

'To be sure I do. Oh, yes, I remember her very well, poor child! I'm glad you remember her too, Musgrave, and I only wish she could be with you now.'

'I have a tolerably good memory, and in any case I presume that few men can forget the existence of their children, although they may have good reasons for wishing to do so. I cannot say that I share your wish to have Laura with me at the present moment. Considering that she has allowed twelve years to elapse without troubling herself to communicate with me or to express one word of regret for the disgrace which she has brought upon me and upon herself, I am unable to feel that a meeting with her would be agreeable or desirable. However, I have just made a will in her favour, under which she will inherit all that I possess, with the exception of a sum of 10,000*l.*, which I have thought it right to bequeath to my nephew Frederick.'

'You don't say so!' exclaimed Dr. Drysdale. 'Well, really you surprise me, Musgrave! So Fred will only get 10,000*l.*; dear me! But have you—excuse my asking the question—any knowledge of your daughter's whereabouts?'

'Not the slightest. As I tell you, she has never communicated with me, directly or indirectly, since the day when she fled from my house with her blackguard of a music-master. In the letter which she left for me then she informed me that she proposed to sail for New Zealand. I do not know whether she carried out her intention or not; I do not know whether she is living or dead. If the latter, my property will go to the next of kin. I could think of no other satisfactory manner of disposing of it,' added the Dean a little regretfully, meaning, perhaps, that he could think of no other manner of disposing of it which would not be eminently satisfactory to somebody.

'Ah!' said his friend meditatively. And then: 'Won't you have Fred telegraphed for, Musgrave?'

'Certainly not. I have no wish to see him, nor can I imagine that he has any wish to see me. He has thought fit to disobey and defy me, and he has deliberately refused to take up any career worthy of a gentleman.'

'Well—hardly that, has he, Musgrave? He has been called to the bar, has he not?'

'Because I insisted upon it. I have led him to the water, but he has given me to understand that I cannot make him drink. Instead of practising or qualifying himself for a legal appointment he is pleased to spend his time in writing plays. Plays!'

'Men have achieved distinction in that way before now,' observed the Master of All Saints mildly.

'Have they, indeed? I was not aware of it.'

'Well, there was Shakespeare, you know.'

'Oh, if you are driven to resort to a *reductio ad absurdum* there is an end of argument, of course. But indeed I have neither the wish nor the power to argue with you. I have more than done my duty to my nephew. In spite of his disobedience I have left him 10,000*l.* to play the fool with; added to which there is a strong probability of his coming into my entire fortune. Under the circumstances, he has perhaps no just ground for complaint if I decline to read his literary productions or to be annoyed by hearing him talk about them.'

'I dare say he wouldn't talk about them,' suggested the peace-maker; for really it seemed a grievous thing that poor Musgrave should pass away without so much as a word of farewell to the nephew whom he had adopted and whom for some time past he had treated as his heir. True, there had of late been a coolness between them, amounting almost to a breach, and it appeared

that Fred was to be punished by inheriting 10,000*l.* instead of a considerable fortune; still it was undoubtedly the young man's duty to be with his uncle at the last, and he ought to be summoned.

His uncle, however, did not seem to think so. 'I don't want to hear him talk about that or any other subject,' he declared. 'I don't want to hear anybody talk—except, perhaps, you for a minute or two. I have heard enough of talk in my long life, and I am weary of it. I am going now to a land where talking is unknown. At least, that is the natural presumption, since talking presupposes a tongue and a tympanum, and I am about to lose mine.'

'When a man dies his spirit returns to God who gave it,' said the Master of All Saints.

'I suppose so. But what that means I do not understand, nor do you, my friend.'

The Dean of St. Cyprian's had always been broad, not to say unorthodox, in his theological views. Many a bitter and heated argument had he had with other ecclesiastical dignitaries upon questions of dogma, but never a one with the Master of All Saints, whose habit it was to listen and shake his head, but to return no answer when attempts were made to draw him into such discussions. He made no answer now; but presently he lowered himself stiffly on to his knees by the bedside and said an audible prayer for the dying man. It was a great liberty to take; it was just the sort of thing that Musgrave would not like at all; only, for all his mildness and meekness, he was not and never had been in the least afraid of Musgrave, which peculiarity of his was possibly one of the reasons why they had remained such good friends.

When he rose the old Dean smiled at him and held out his hand. 'Good-bye, Drysdale,' said he; 'thank you for coming.'

'I will come again to-morrow,' said the other.

'Ah—to-morrow! I am not sure that you will find me here to-morrow. Still, if you are passing this way and care to look in——. For to-night, however, I must dismiss you; I am fairly tired out.'

So the worthy Dr. Drysdale departed, and, instead of making straight for home, went to the nearest post-office, whence he despatched, upon his own responsibility, a telegram to Mr. Frederick Musgrave in London.

He might have spared himself the trouble; for, as it chanced,

Mr. Frederick Musgrave was dining out when the telegram reached his rooms, nor did he receive it until past midnight, before which hour the Dean of St. Cyprian's was dead.

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## CHAPTER II.

As the pendulum of the clock swings to and fro, ticking off minutes and seconds from the limited period of time allotted to each of us as our share of sojourn upon the surface of this planet, the process of decay and renewal, which alone renders it inhabitable, goes on without interruption.

Every moment dies a man,  
Every moment one is born.

We cannot be always mourning with those who mourn or rejoicing with those who rejoice; for, if we could, our lives would be spent in a perpetual state of hysterics, which would altogether incapacitate us for the performance of our daily duties. Yet every now and then we receive a disagreeable shock when we find that we have unconsciously and in a figurative sense been dancing over the graves of our friends, and it was certainly an unfortunate and incongruous circumstance that while the Dean of St. Cyprian's was gasping his life out in his solitary room at Oxford, his nephew should have been enjoying himself very much at a cheery London dinner-party.

General Moore's dinners were always cheery, as indeed, for the matter of that, was General Moore himself. It is the right, not to say the duty, of a retired officer with an ample income, a handsome young wife, and a commodious mansion in South Kensington to be cheery. The General liked seeing his friends, of whom he had plenty, and his wife liked entertaining. Perhaps the skill and tact displayed in the selecting and assorting of the guests who assembled so constantly in the house in Cromwell Road should be credited rather to her than to him. She was his second wife and his junior by something more than twenty years, her step-daughter Susie being now eighteen. She had four small children of her own; but that did not prevent her from being an excellent step-mother, as step-mothers go, and resolved to do her very best for Susie, who had made her formal entrance into society at the last Drawing-room. That is to say, that whenever

she issued invitations for a dinner-party, she took care to consult Susie's interests by the inclusion of at least one eligible young man in the list.

On this particular occasion she had two; namely, Mr. Frederick Musgrave, and Captain Claughton of the 4th Life Guards, to both of whom had been assigned parts in the private theatricals which were to take place later in the evening. As for Captain Claughton, it was perhaps going a little bit too far to describe him as strictly eligible. He was well-bred and by no means bad-looking; he seemed to spend a good deal of money, and his father had a considerable property. But then he was not his father's eldest son; and young fellows in the Household Brigade are only too apt to spend a good deal of money which they do not possess. Mr. Musgrave, however, was certainly all right. It was well known that he would in due season inherit the fortune of his uncle, the Dean of St. Cyprian's, an old man in failing health, who, as Mrs. Moore had heard upon the best authority, had been economising more than half of his income for many years past. Mr. Musgrave, therefore, might be encouraged with a clear conscience, and of late Mr. Musgrave had received as much encouragement as any young man could wish for. These theatricals, for instance, had been got up entirely by his wish and under his supervision. He knew something about theatrical matters, for he was the author of a little comedy which had been accepted by a London manager, and was even now being performed nightly; besides which, he had, when at Oxford, been somewhat notorious as an amateur actor. And so, in permitting him to arrange this entertainment, and to instruct Susie in an art of which she had hitherto been ignorant, one seemed, as it were, to be killing two birds with a single stone; because, of course, one wishes one's entertainments to be successful almost as much as one wishes one's step-daughter to be provided with a husband. <sup>1</sup>

Fred Musgrave fully intended the entertainment to be successful; perhaps, too, he intended to oblige his hostess in the other particular specified. At all events, he was beginning to think that he did; and the somewhat forward behaviour of Captain Claughton made him think so still more. Trim, slim Captain Claughton, with his closely cut black hair, his slight moustache, his perfectly fitting clothes and his eye-glass, assumed during dinner a certain air of confidential familiarity in talking to Miss Moore which struck the other young man as rather



offensive. As, however, the other young man was very good-natured and easy-going, he did not lose his temper, but only wondered whether Miss Moore really liked that sort of thing, and hoped she didn't, and was a little bit afraid that she did. It seemed quite possible that she might, nor was there any reason why she shouldn't; for Claughton was a very pleasant-mannered fellow, and she had already seen enough of him to have discovered that his admiration was not given to everybody. If he admired her, he paid her a compliment which no doubt she deserved, but which she might nevertheless be pardoned for appreciating.

Susie Moore, though not likely to achieve renown by reason of her beauty, had been pronounced to be 'decidedly upon the pretty side' by her step-mother. 'She has points,' that unbiassed critic had declared. 'Of course, if you take her piecemeal, there isn't much to be said for her; but she has a genuine complexion, and her hair and eyes are of a rather nice shade of brown, and the general effect is quite pleasing. Besides, she is as good as gold.'

The latter encomium may have been irrelevant, but it was true, and it certainly deserved to be reckoned among Susie's charms. One may venture to say, without fear of giving offence (because no young woman would think of applying the remark to anybody except her neighbours), that, whatever may be the charms of *débutantes* of the present day, that is scarcely the one for which the majority of them are conspicuous, and perhaps it was Susie's possession of it that had aroused the interest of Captain Claughton, who had dawdled through many London seasons. Possibly also it may have been that which had attracted Fred Musgrave; though he was a man of quite another type, and had had fewer opportunities of discovering its rarity.

He himself might almost have been cited as coming under the same denomination. Notwithstanding his twenty-seven years, he had remained to most intents and purposes a boy. He was liable to be carried away by occasional enthusiasms, such as his present craze for the drama; he had a fine, healthy belief in his fellow-creatures, nearly all of whom he liked, and, having always been extremely popular, he had fallen into the habit of taking his own way and expecting that other people would see the reasonableness of making their convenience suit his. Probably he would have been rather a spoilt boy but for the natural sweetness of his disposition, which had enabled him to keep upon tolerably good

terms even with his crabbed and arbitrary old uncle. In respect of personal appearance he had the advantage of Captain Claughton, being tall, broad-shouldered, and handsome, with curly fair hair, blue eyes, and regular features. In a vague sort of way he was understood to be clever, though it cannot be said that he had as yet done much to earn that reputation, save by the production of the comedy above mentioned.

When one has such a number of things to make one happy as health, strength, good looks, popularity, and a rich uncle, one must be abnormal indeed if one does not enjoy life, and Fred Musgrave enjoyed it thoroughly. He enjoyed General Moore's dinner, in spite of the slight disturbance of equilibrium which has been alluded to; he enjoyed making preparations for the play afterwards, and giving last instructions to Susie, whom he had been carefully drilling during the previous fortnight; and most of all he enjoyed the play itself, which proved an unbroken triumph for him from beginning to end. Captain Claughton, to be sure, had to figure in it as Susie's lover; the exigencies of the piece demanded that. But Captain Claughton's histrionic abilities were but slender, and though he got through his part respectably, he did not throw much animation into it or obtain much applause from his audience. Fred, on the other hand, was applauded loudly, and a great many flattering things were said both of and to him after the conclusion of the performance, which was succeeded by what Mrs. Moore was pleased to call 'a little impromptu dance.'

'Fine young fellow, that young Musgrave!' one of her guests remarked to her as she stood in the doorway, smiling benignly upon the dancers; 'one doesn't often see such a happy combination of brains and physique. Pity he has no regular occupation.'

'Well, perhaps,' agreed Mrs. Moore indulgently; 'but he seems to be able to make plenty of occupations for himself, and he will never be under the necessity of working for his living, I suppose.'

Mrs. Moore's friend, who was a middle-aged gentleman of large experience, shook his head with a sceptical smile. 'I understand that he is entirely dependent upon his uncle, Dean Musgrave, the most cantankerous, cross-grained old wretch in the three kingdoms. Suppose his uncle were to take it into his head to cut him off with a shilling to-morrow!'

'Oh, but he would never do such a wicked thing!' exclaimed Mrs. Moore, quite shocked.

'There's no saying *what* an old man may not do,' returned the other impressively. 'I myself had an uncle who married when he was nearer seventy than sixty, and, if you'll believe me, that man had three children before he died. Left the whole of his money among them too, though for years he had been in the habit of spending the greater part of every summer in our house and growling at the cook. Besides, hasn't old Musgrave got a prodigal son somewhere or other, whom he kicked out of doors in days gone by?'

'Oh, no, I don't think so,' answered Mrs. Moore; 'I never heard a word about his having had any children.'

'Well, I have. Upon second thoughts I'm not sure that it wasn't a prodigal daughter. Anyhow, there was somebody.'

Mrs. Moore made a mental note of the alleged circumstance. She did not know very much about Mr. Musgrave or his belongings, and perhaps it might become her duty to make inquiries.

Meanwhile Fred, unconscious of the disagreeable possibilities which were being forecast on his behalf, was dancing with pretty little Susie Moore, and it so chanced that when their waltz was over, and when he had led her into the apology for a conservatory which adjoined the ball-room, she began, in the innocence of her heart, to question him about his present manner of life and his plans for the future, of which she was even more ignorant than her mother. Fred did not object to being questioned; he had nothing to conceal, and he was pleased that Miss Moore should display any interest in his career.

'My present ambition,' he informed her, 'is to develop into a dramatic author. That is a very respectable sort of ambition, it seems to me, though my uncle thinks differently.'

'Your uncle and you generally do think differently, don't you?' asked the girl.

'I should hardly say that: we get on wonderfully well, considering all things. As for our thinking alike, it is impossible to tell whether we do or not, because my uncle has a sort of mania for opposition. It would go to his heart to have to confess that he agreed with you upon any given subject. He disapproves strongly of my writing plays; but that's a matter of course. I suppose he would disapprove of my accepting the office of Prime Minister, if it were offered to me.'

'That must be rather disagreeable for you.'

'Oh, I'm accustomed to it, and I don't mind. It's only his way. Every now and then we have a quarrel—we are supposed

to be in the midst of a quarrel at present—but it blows over after a bit, and we go on as before.'

'Does that mean that you always end by doing what you wish?'

'Well, pretty much; but then I never wish to do what he has any business to dislike.'

'I should think he must have been very kind to you,' observed Susie, after a moment of reflection; 'you seem to live only to amuse yourself.'

'Oh, Miss Moore, what a cruel thing to say! I am sure I have every wish to lead a useful existence; but I really don't see why I shouldn't amuse myself into the bargain. My amusements are quite healthy and innocent. I play cricket; I shoot a little, when I get the chance; I hunt a little, if anybody is good enough to give me a mount; and sometimes I take a part in private theatricals. There's no harm in all that, is there?'

'No; only I should have thought that, with your talents, you might have been better employed.'

'I know what you mean; I ought to have a profession. Now, I'll tell you exactly how that matter stands. Shortly after I matriculated my uncle gave me my choice of the professions which he said were the only ones open to a gentleman. There weren't a great many of them. The Navy of course was out of the question; so that there remained the Army, the Church, the Bar, and Diplomacy. I chose the Army. He said, Very well; only I must take my degree first—which practically disposed of that. Diplomacy wouldn't do, because of my ignorance of foreign languages; I didn't feel that I had any vocation for the Church; and accordingly I swallowed the requisite number of dinners and became a barrister. But the study of the law is simply loathsome to me, whereas I really do think that I have some little turn for the composition of dramatic dialogue. Consequently I write plays instead of pleading cases. According to my ideas, the one is as much a profession as the other; but my uncle can't be brought to admit it.'

'And is he very angry with you?'

'Oh, he says he never was so disgusted and disappointed in all his life; but that is a mistake. He has been quite as much disgusted and disappointed scores of times before, and he will continue to be so to his dying day.'

Susie laughed. 'Poor old fellow! But don't you think you ought to try and do what he would like?'

'That would be an impossible ideal to strive after, because nobody has ever yet discovered what he would like. I would a great deal rather try to do what you would like, Miss Moore.'

'I? Oh, but I am not your uncle.'

'Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that you are my aunt; you will find me a dutiful and submissive nephew. Only issue your commands, and you shall be obeyed to the best of my poor ability.'

Susie declined the responsibility which it was sought to thrust upon her; yet, on being a little further pressed, she did not refuse to state what—supposing that she had any reason to feel a personal interest in Mr. Musgrave's career—she would desire on his behalf. And it was gratifying to hear that, in that event, her aspirations would not, after all, differ very widely from his own. A man, she thought, ought always to set some definite object before himself and work towards it; but she admitted that the circumstance of his being a barrister does not compel him to keep one eye for ever fixed upon the woollack. One may very well deserve to be Lord Chancellor without attaining to that dignity, whereas one can scarcely become the most successful dramatic author of the period without deserving it. Therefore the ambitious playwright is rather more likely to reach his goal than the ambitious barrister, while both ambitions must be pronounced equally legitimate.

Now, anybody can guess what course a conversation thus initiated was sure to take, and if Fred Musgrave, when he left the house, had not declared his love to Susie Moore, that was because he was a conscientious young man, and knew that he had no business to propose to anyone without having previously obtained his uncle's permission to do so. He was not, however, so conscientious but that he had made his wishes tolerably clear, and Susie certainly had not seemed to be displeased with him. And so, as he was being driven in a hansom towards the chambers in St. James's where he dwelt, he whistled light-heartedly and had visions of a happy future. He would go down to Oxford the very next day, he resolved, and make it up with his uncle. That, probably, would not be difficult. He had had periods of estrangement from the old man before now, and had always been able to terminate them when it had pleased him to do so. In fact, he had a pretty strong conviction that he was essential to his uncle's comfort, and also that that terrible old gentleman's bark was worse than his bite. 'I suppose,' he thought, 'I shall have to

make some concession. Perhaps I might promise to go circuit once a year, upon the understanding that I must be allowed to occupy my spare moments in composing comedies. Of course, when I first introduce the subject of my possible marriage there will be a tremendous explosion, but he'll cool down before night and see that I might do worse. The Moores are all right as far as breeding and connections go—that's one comfort.'

Then, having reached his destination, he ran upstairs, and on the table he espied the telegram from the Master of All Saints, which had been lying there for the last six hours or more.

*'Come here as soon as you can. Your uncle is dangerously ill.'*

The young man was startled and sobered. He had heard nothing of this illness, and was quite unprepared for a summons which, unfortunately, he could not at once obey. The first train for Oxford would leave at 5.30, and it was now nearer three than two o'clock. It was hardly worth while to go to bed, so he changed his clothes, packed up a few things, and smoked until it was time to start. Upon further reflection he did not feel very much alarmed, his temperament always inclining him to hope for the best; still, although the delay which had occurred in his departure was due to no fault of his, he was sorry about it and afraid that the old man might set him down as heartless. As a matter of fact he was really fond of the old man—more so, perhaps, than the old man had been of him. But that is a point which can never be decided; for the secret of Dean Musgrave's affections, supposing that he possessed any, remained in his own keeping and died with him.

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### CHAPTER III.

It was still early morning when Fred Musgrave reached Oxford, and walked up from the station to the venerable college in which for so many years his uncle had been more feared than loved. The ancient buildings looked grim and mournful under the leaden March sky; the soft stone of which, like all except the most modern Oxford edifices, they had been constructed, was peeling and crumbling away, and to a fanciful spectator they might have worn an ominously suggestive aspect of death and decay. Fred Musgrave, however, was not at all a fanciful



person, and he only thought that it was a horrid raw morning, and that he would be glad to warm himself before the dining-room fire. Nor did he draw any gloomy deductions from the circumstance that all the blinds in the Dean's residence were drawn down: most people's blinds are down before eight o'clock on a wintry morning.

It was, therefore, a great shock to him when Williams, the butler, appeared with a very long face, and, in answer to his inquiry, said: 'It's all over, sir, I am sorry to tell you. The Dean expired peacefully shortly after eleven o'clock last night, sir.'

The housekeeper followed, with confirmatory sighs and shakings of the head. Neither she nor the butler had been much attached to their late master—indeed, it was quite impossible that they should be—but decency commands us to look sad when anybody dies, even though he may have been an old man and a tyrant into the bargain. As for Fred, his distress was genuine, though he could not for the moment find any words in which to express it.

'How awfully sudden!' he exclaimed.

'Well, I don't know as we can call it that, sir,' answered the housekeeper, twisting her cap-strings between her fingers. 'For three days past I 'aven't 'ad no 'opes myself, and when the doctor come yesterday he give me to understand as nothing more could be done.'

'And yet you never sent for me!'

'We durstn't do it, sir, without orders. Day before yesterday I says to Mr. Williams—which he can bear me out in that—"Didn't somebody ought to telegraph for Mr. Frederick?" I says; and Mr. Williams he quite agree. But I couldn't take upon me to mention it, you see, sir; and when Mr. Breffit was here yesterday I spoke to him; but he couldn't give me no authority to hact. "Well," he says, "*under* the circumstances," he says—'

'It doesn't much signify what Mr. Breffit said,' interrupted Fred, who perhaps was not particularly anxious to hear the circumstances in question dilated upon; 'the upshot of it is that, among you, you have managed to prevent me from saying good-bye to my uncle.'

'Which no one can deplore that more than I do, I'm sure, sir,' returned Mrs. Simpson with an injured air.

The butler begged to associate himself with that expression

of regret. At the same time, he felt bound to say that in his opinion no blame attached to Mrs. Simpson. Mr. Frederick must be aware that instant dismissal would have been the fate of any servant who should have presumed to offer a suggestion to the late Dean.

Mr. Frederick was quite aware of it; and indeed he was also aware that both Williams and Simpson were inspired by more friendly feelings towards himself than any that they had ever entertained for the old man, who had paid them handsomely but had treated them like slaves. 'Well,' he said, after a pause, 'it was no fault of yours, I suppose; but I wish Dr. Drysdale had thought of summoning me a little sooner.'

Then he asked for some particulars of his uncle's illness; and then, since we must eat, whatever happens, he had his breakfast.

Later in the morning he went upstairs and looked for the last time upon the stern, calm features which had never been quite so terrible to him as they had been to the rest of the world. His uncle had not been his friend, nor anything approaching to his friend; no confidences had ever been exchanged between them, nor had the severity meted out to him been even tempered by justice. Yet he could not but remember, and had no wish to forget, that he owed everything to his uncle. He well recollected the day when, as a boy of fifteen, he had been sent to Oxford, had been introduced into the presence of his alarming relative, and had been coldly informed that henceforth he would be provided for and 'educated in the manner customary amongst English gentlemen'—always supposing that he did not grossly misconduct himself. He had since often wondered what would have become of him if he had not been adopted by the old Dean. He had at that time been an orphan, absolutely alone in the world, and absolutely without means of subsistence. His father, after having amassed a large fortune as a China merchant, had lost everything through some unfortunate speculations and had dropped down dead on the very day that his bankruptcy was announced. Then the Dean of St. Cyprian's, who had broken off all relations with his brother from the moment that the latter had engaged in trade (an avocation which, according to the Dean's ideas, was utterly disgraceful and degrading to a Musgrave), thought fit to take charge of his brother's only child; and it is but fair to add that he behaved quite as generously to Fred as he would have done to a son of his own. He was not tender; he made no allowances for the young fellow (except, in due season,

a pecuniary one, which was sufficiently liberal); he took very little interest in his pursuits or tastes; but he tolerated him, and that, after all, was more than he had been able to accomplish in the case of any other living mortal, with the solitary exception of the Master of All Saints.

Fred had not distinguished himself at the University, save in the matter of athletics; but he had been steady and sensible, and had not run up bills. Such differences as he had had with his uncle, until that rather serious one arose about the question of his career, had for the most part had their origin in mere trifles, and the younger man had always given in—or at any rate appeared to give in—with a grace and good humour which the elder had been unable to resist. To Fred these needless quarrels and reconciliations had seemed more comical than provoking; he had taken a very indulgent view of the perversity which had brought them about; probably he had to some extent understood his uncle, though it is doubtful whether his uncle had ever understood him.

Well, it was all over now; and henceforth this once destitute orphan would not only be his own master but the master of considerable wealth. He could not help thinking a little about that, though he was rather ashamed of admitting the thought at such a time. That he would be the sole inheritor of his uncle's fortune he did not doubt for a moment: who else was there to inherit it? And this reflection naturally led to the further one that there was nothing now to debar him from proposing to Susie Moore.

The moment that the breath is out of the body of a king his successor seizes pen and paper and indites a manifesto to the nation. Custom requires of him that he should do this, and also that, in doing it, he should use certain conventional expressions of grief; but it will be observed that these manifestoes, when stripped of conventionalisms, usually amount to nothing more or less than: 'I beg to inform you that I have ascended the throne. Three cheers for me!' In private life something of the same sort is very apt to occur; and indeed there is no help for it. The world is for the living; a man must needs face his new duties and responsibilities and privileges; one should not be too hard upon an heir who finds that his sorrow is mingled with an excitement which is not very far removed from joy. But Fred did his best to choke down any such sentiment, and he received some

help in doing so from the Master of All Saints, who called later in the day and who asked to see him.

'My dear fellow,' exclaimed the old man, 'I'm dreadfully distressed about this—dreadfully distressed to hear that you did not arrive in time! I blame myself for it; though I assure you I had no idea that my poor friend's life was in danger until yesterday afternoon. As soon as I knew that I telegraphed; but unhappily it was too late. If only you could have met, he would doubtless have forgiven you. Not that you have much to reproach yourself with; for, after all, it is no crime to write a play. Still——'

'I don't think my uncle was really very angry with me,' said the young man, somewhat surprised. 'And even if he was, I am sure he forgave me before he died.'

'Yes; well—perhaps. Let us hope so,' answered Dr. Drysdale, who had been going to say a little more, but who changed his intention. It was possible that no such will as the Dean had described to him had actually been executed; and again it was quite possible that, if executed, it had been revoked. Perhaps the best plan was to keep his own counsel for the present, since the truth must so soon be known. He contented himself, therefore, with a few oracular utterances upon the uncertainty of all earthly things and with making some excuses which seemed a little unnecessary for his dead friend.

Fred quite mistook his meaning. He thought he was receiving a mild lecture for his selfishness and wilfulness, and he was not at all sure that he didn't deserve it. Certainly there is no crime in writing a play, but perhaps he might have shown a little more deference to the wishes of his benefactor, whose wishes could never be enforced again. As a matter of fact, the wishes and wills of deceased benefactors can be and are enforced, with all the majesty of the law to back them; but this view of the case did not present itself to Fred, and after Dr. Drysdale had left him he was as penitent and melancholy as his uncle would have said that he ought to be.

He had, of course, a good deal to occupy him during the next few days. Every morning the post brought him instructions from Mr. Breffit, who appeared in person to attend the funeral, accompanied by one Sir James Le Breton, an ex-Indian judge and a brother of the late Dean's wife. With this gentleman the Dean had remained on terms of amity, although—or more probably because—they had never met, and he had, therefore, at Mr. Breffit's

suggestion, been requested to pay the last tribute of respect that could be paid to his kinsman.

Fred and he represented the family of the deceased between them; there was absolutely no one else who could have been asked to figure in that capacity, although the ceremony was attended by a large number of ecclesiastical dignitaries, and some distinguished literary and scientific men came down from London in order to be present at it. The majority of the visitors, having borne their part in a rite which was rather imposing than touching, hurried away; a few returned to luncheon at the late Dean's residence, and after these had departed Mr. Breffit stated, not without a certain mournful solemnity, that it would now be his duty to read the will.

From this it appeared, first of all, that the Master of All Saints and Sir James Le Breton were nominated as executors, and that to each of them was bequeathed a sum of 100*l.* as a small token of regard. The valuable library of the testator was left to the College of St. Cyprian's; the servants took substantial legacies; then, after a pause and with something of a sigh, Mr. Breffit announced that a sum of 10,000*l.* was to go to 'my nephew Frederick Musgrave,' and that the residue of the estate, real and personal, went to 'my daughter, Laura Fenton,' whom failing, the next of kin was to inherit in her place.

Whether, as a general rule, it is amusing or not to be a solicitor must of course depend upon what people's notions of amusement may be; but if a solicitor's duties are in the main a little dull, they are no doubt susceptible of occasional enlivenment by the power to bring about a truly dramatic situation, and any satisfaction that Mr. Breffit may have been able to derive from the knowledge of having thoroughly astonished his hearers was not denied to him. Sir James Le Breton, a thin, white-haired old gentleman, who had been rather annoyed to find that he was to be saddled with the duties of an executor, and somewhat consoled on hearing that he was to have a hundred pounds for his trouble, started up, exclaiming, 'God bless my soul!—his daughter, Laura Fenton! Why, I always understood that she had died long ago.'

Fred's amazement was even more profound, since he had not until now been aware that such a person had ever existed. He sat with his mouth open and made no remark.

'I am almost entirely without information upon the subject,' Mr. Breffit said. 'When Dean Musgrave first did us the honour to

entrust us with the management of his affairs, his daughter was already married, and the references which he has instructed me to make to her in previous wills have been unimportant, and—and I may say hypothetical. From other sources, however, I have learnt that about a dozen years ago this lady contracted an alliance of which her father disapproved, that she has not since then held any communication with him, and that she and her husband emigrated to New Zealand immediately after their marriage. If living, she is probably in New Zealand now.'

Sir James Le Breton rubbed his ear impatiently and said, 'How the deuce are we to get hold of the woman?' To which Mr. Breffit replied, 'Well, I suppose we must advertise.'

The Master of All Saints, who was also present, but who had not opened his lips up to now, observed in an apologetic tone that nobody would quite like his daughter to run away with the music-master, and that one could easily understand how a man upon the threshold of death might hesitate between the conflicting claims of paternity and—and—in short, other claims.

Mr. Breffit regretted that he did not possess the same facility of comprehension. It was not for him to express any opinion as to the action of his late client; but he was bound to say that in all his experience he had never met with a man less given to hesitation. This appeared to exhaust all that there was to be said about the matter. A short period of silence supervened, and shortly afterwards the conclave broke up. The Master of All Saints, before leaving the room, patted Fred on the shoulder and looked sympathetic, but as he could not think of anything consolatory to say he adopted the wise course of saying nothing.

Mr. Breffit was more outspoken. Mr. Breffit knew Fred well, and liked him. The late Dean, who had been a most litigious person and had kept his legal advisers pretty constantly employed, had often invited Mr. Breffit down to Oxford for a day or two at a time, and thus an acquaintanceship, which was almost a friendship, had sprung up between the lawyer and the young man who had always been understood to be his uncle's heir. When, therefore, these two were left together, the former did not allow professional reticence to deter him from exclaiming, 'Upon my word it's a confounded shame! And so I would have told him if it would have been of the slightest use. But you are as well aware as anybody that your uncle was not the man to brook interference.'

'Oh, I don't know about it's being a shame,' said Fred; 'it



seems to me quite right that he should have provided for his daughter, since he had a daughter. The extraordinary thing is that neither he nor anybody else should have breathed a word about her to me in all these years.'

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders. 'In my opinion, and in everybody else's opinion, she was virtually, if not actually, dead; and your uncle did not like his family affairs to be talked about. I might have warned you that there was just the possibility of a doubt about your succeeding to his property, but I had no reason to suppose that there was such a possibility, so I thought it best to hold my tongue with regard to matters which did not concern me.'

'It's all quite as it should be,' Fred declared. 'Discoveries of this kind rather take one's breath away; but I certainly have no cause to complain. Ten thousand pounds is a good round sum.'

'Oh, you think so, do you? You imagine that you will be able to live upon the interest of 10,000*l.*? You imagine, perhaps, that you have hitherto been living upon such an income?'

'There's no imagination about it. My uncle allowed me three hundred a year.'

'And paid the greater part of your expenses into the bargain.'

'Well, he helped me out with a cheque from time to time; but if I can get five per cent. for my money——'

'You can't get five per cent. for your money—nobody can. And you have no profession worth speaking of. I confess I should look upon it as a bad business if I didn't feel tolerably certain that your cousin Mrs. Fenton is no more.'

'Why shouldn't she be alive and well?'

'Simply because she has given no signs of life for twelve years. Just consider what the position of affairs is. Here is a woman, married to a musician who certainly can be no great master of his craft, or he wouldn't have emigrated. She is the only child of a rich man—for, mind you, the Dean inherited from more than one relation, and he held house property which has greatly increased in value. I shall be very much surprised if his estate realises a penny less than 200,000*l.* Well now, I ask you, is it likely that a woman so circumstanced would have allowed all this time to elapse without so much as trying the effect of saying, "I beg your pardon"?''

'It doesn't strike me as impossible. I wonder whether you will succeed in unearthing her!'

'I hope that she is a little too far beneath the surface of the earth for that; but of course every inquiry will be made, and I trust that our labours may be rewarded by the discovery of her burial certificate.'

'Thanks; but it seems rather shabby to wish her dead, poor thing! Anyhow, I had better assume that she is alive.'

'Oh, yes, you had better assume that in the meantime. And if I were you, I should abandon all thought of a literary career. Literary earnings are very precarious at best, and then, you see, literature leads to nothing. A barrister may not make his fortune while he is young; but he has always the prospect of dropping into some snug berth or other by the time that he is growing old.'

Fred, however, did not seem disposed to listen to well-meant advice upon that point.

*(To be continued.)*

## *At the Sign of the Ship.*

'THE Pitilessness of Angling' has excited the indignation of the *Spectator*. Anglers are in a parlous state if there be pitilessness in the catching of fish. But, after all, we may answer, like Mr. *Punch's* little boy, 'Wha's catching fish?' Even the humane person in the *Spectator* will admit that there is no cruelty in *not* catching fish. Angling, as usually practised, is merely an innocent way of taking the air, and the water, more of the water than one wants occasionally. Angling encourages the skill of rod-makers, fly-makers, makers of lines and hooks. It also fosters the poetic imagination, as everyone knows who has listened to fishing stories. They are all pure fanciful myths, reposing on the suppressed hypothesis that people catch trout. Speaking for myself, I can call witnesses who will swear, on a copy of the *Spectator*, that *I* never catch anything. Very few people do. The thunder in the air, the east wind, the absence of flies, the presence of too many flies, too strong a wind, no wind at all, too much water, too little water, the breaking of a top joint, the loss of one's fly-book, the stupidity of the boatman, the dexterity of the young lady who works the landing-net—all these and other accidents make fly-fishing the most harmless of sports. For my own part, I can fancy no recreation in which a Buddhist might participate with a conscience more void of offence.

\* \* \*

But even if one caught fish (which is a mere poetic dream) the amusement would not be cruel. The writer thinks it takes a long time to 'kill' a salmon or large trout. That may be because when she herself landed her first fish she put her fingers in her ears, ran away, and screamed. Of course *that* fish was long a dying; the captor probably remembers how, whenever she returned and looked at it, the wretched gudgeon was flapping its tail. No wonder the *Spectator* thought angling pitiless. But it does not really 'take many minutes to kill' a fish. If the *Spectator* will hit him one tap just where his neck should be, he will expire without a sigh or a struggle. No euthanasia can be

more prompt, no extinction more painless. The veal cutlet of the Spectatorial dinner, the bacon of breakfast, nay the mutton, the beef, and the chicken suffer infinitely more—I mean the animals which purvey them suffer infinitely more in dying than the salmon or trout.

But when the *Spectator* talks of ‘killing’ a fish, landing him may be meant. Is that such a painful process? Trout, the most shy of our fish, often come back and are captured, with the angler’s broken fly or casting line in their mouths. Would they do this if they were so much hurt? Suppose you went to the editor of the *Spectator* while he was on the feed; suppose you delicately cast a nicely devilled whitebait over him, rose him, and hooked him; suppose that he leaped in the air four or five feet high and then ran below the table, and sulked, and tried to entangle the line in the legs of chairs. Then, of course, you would tighten the line on him, and tap the butt of the rod, and your gillie would throw stones at him, or stir him up with a young tree. If this succeeded, he would make the reel sing, rushing upstairs, plunging downstairs, racing up and down the drawing-room, and finally would break you in the banisters.

Well, after all this play, do you think it likely that if you fished over the dining-room again, you would raise the editor with a mutton cutlet, an asparagus, or a strawberry? Assuredly not; he would be ‘put down’ for days and only rise at arrowroot, and that very cautiously. But trout do not behave thus. It often happens that, after being hooked on a small blue dun, and breaking the casting line, they return and rise at a sedge, or an alder, and get landed. So I am told, for, as I have admitted, I never catch anything myself. What is the inference? Clearly, that trout do not feel like men and editors. I could not fish, I could not take the chance of inflicting such anguish, as a trout would feel if it felt like the editor in the cruel scene which I have steeled myself to describe. I could not bear, like Praed’s Red Fisherman, to

Draw out an Alderman, jolly and fat,  
With a belly as broad as a brimming vat,  
And a nose as red as a comet.

But trout are often hooked in parts of their gills which are made of a transparent horny substance, and which feel no more than your shirt collar, or in a substance like white leather, which feels about as much as your gloves. If you raise and hook a salmon, what does he usually do? He swims slowly about, and does not concern himself much at first. Then he thinks he will cross the

pool and feed on the other side. But he finds that something is impeding his motion, he shakes his head, jerks, and then, losing his presence of mind, he skips and bounces here and there, not because he is in pain, but because he wishes to regain his liberty.

\* \* \*

The *Spectator* argues, however, that most trout sulk after being hooked, and that only in rare cases do they come back for more. This does not prove that they have been hurt, however. It only shows that they *resent having been duped*. The trout is always playing a game against the angler and the water fly, whatever fly may be on the water. He argues that he fancies he knows a March Brown when he sees it, and that he is aware of spurious imitations. Naturally, when he makes a bite at a spurious imitation, he feels that he has been made a fool of, and he sulks. You can put him down by a clumsy cast, even when he has not risen at all. 'There is one of these advertising fellows,' he says, 'with his cheap substitutes for olive duns,' and he leaves off dining. You see his sulky shoulder ploughing the crystal stream as he shogs off. He is not physically hurt, but his finer feelings are wounded. The *Spectator*, if I understand the argument, says that, when a fish once hooked *does* return, it is because he wants a pick-me-up after all the anguish and excitement. Instinct urges him to restore tissue. But if that were so, *all* hooked and escaped trout would rise voraciously, to restore tissue, after their flutter with the angler. The *Spectator* admits, nay urges, that this is not so, that only a few hooked fish are caught afterwards, with the flies and cast in their mouths. But they would all do this, if they were in such pressing need of refreshment. They would be like those extraordinary young ladies and gentlemen who, as soon as they find they cannot marry the being they want, wed the first person who comes along. So trout, flying from one hook, would hasten to take the next chance. I have known two boys, fishing for perch hard by each other, see first one of their floats go down, and then the other. Both pulled in, and *both were fast in the same perch*. After swallowing one hook it went on and took the other. This is not a fable; the scene was Faldonside Loch, many years ago. It can scarcely be argued that there was 'pitilessness' in fishing for this voracious perch.

The *Spectator* is puzzled and horrified by the undeniable fact that Mr. John Bright was a fisher. It is the brightest point in his character to my thinking, for my tastes in poetry and politics (especially as to the Factory Acts) were not Mr. Bright's. But

the *Spectator* is puzzled—so good a man and (previous to the little trouble of 1886) so excellent a Liberal. Yet he fished. What would William Wordsworth have said?—William who ‘never mixed his pleasure or his pride with suffering of the meanest thing that breathes,’ which is blank verse, if not argument. Why, like Mark Twain’s bad boy, William Wordsworth would have ‘said it was bully.’ People do not seem to know that William Wordsworth was a keen angler. His sport is described by Dorothy in her journal, and his poems actually smell of trout. A writer in *Blackwood’s Magazine* (July) fancies that Wordsworth had a moral objection to fishing. But Wordsworth knew that trout don’t feel, and for the eternal confusion of the *Spectator*, he writes:—

WHILE FLOWING RIVERS YIELD A BLAMELESS SPORT,  
SHALL LIVE THE NAME OF WALTON, SAGE BENIGN.

\* \* \*

Shelley pitched into Wordsworth about fishing. Shelley thought it pitiless. Probably *he* thought that young ladies don’t feel. He would make love to them, make fools of them, and leave them, and laugh at them, and call them vulgar school-girls. I prefer the pitilessness of old William Wordsworth, and of Walton, sage benign.

\* \* \*

All this suggests the yearly problem, What do the men with long rods catch in the Regent’s Canal, near Lord’s? I saw a crowd there lately, and found they were waiting for the rise, like stockbrokers, but it was difficult to make out what fish were rising. They may have been dace or roach, and, as I have no ambition to capture these, nor the idiotically gullible greyling, I will make a concession to the *Spectator*, and admit that dace, roach, and greyling fishing is horribly cruel. But salmon and trout do not feel.

\* \* \*

After so much prose, here followeth verse, of a fragrant summer character, and admirably adapted for consumption in hot weather.

#### MEADOW-SWEET.

The meadow-sweet was uplifting  
Its plumelets of delicate hue,  
The clouds were all dreamily drifting  
Above in the blue,



On the day when I broke from my tether,  
And fled from square and from street ;—  
The day we went walking together  
In the meadow, Sweet.

The meadow, sweet with its clover  
And bright with its buttercups lay ;  
The swallows kept eddying over  
All flashing and gay ;

I remember a fairylike feather  
Sailed down your coming to greet,  
The day we went walking together  
In the meadow, Sweet.

Ah ! the meadow, Sweet ! and the singing  
Of birds in the boughs overhead !  
And your soft little hand to mine clinging,  
And the words that you said

When—bold in the beautiful weather—

I laid my love at your feet  
The day we went walking together  
In the meadow, Sweet.

FRANCES WYNNE.

\* \* \*

An Orcadian correspondent sends the following anecdote of 'How a Minister encouraged Superstition.' Can we blame the worthy pastor for making use of the spiritual machinery at his command? It was a pious fraud, an innocent piece of priestcraft. Here begins the story, as told to my correspondent by a native :—

'Aye, there was once a minister here, a drunkard called X—— (his relations may be living still), and in that time, you see, all the collections taken in the kirk were put in a box and a note kept by the elder, and at the end of every quarter the elders opened the box, and what was in it was divided among the poor of the parish. There was one Sabbath that one of the elders went to the vestry for the box, and when he opened it it was empty. He cam' back and he askit the minister to search him, but "Na, na, Jeems," says he ; "no one's dooting you. But never mind the money ; if it's within the ring o' Ronsay, I'll have it back before next Sunday."

'Auld Tam K—— was kirk officer, and he was always the last to leave the kirk, an' this day the minister stayed and walked home with him.

"This is an awkward thing that's happened me, Tam," says he, "and it'll ha'e me do the thing I'd rather leave,"

"Aye, sir, an' what's that?"

"Oh, just to raise the Deevil, and he'll come to the man that took that money either in a wind that'll no leave him leaf nor sheaf, or wi' a rope to hang him over his own door."

'Auld Tam never said a word more till they cam' to the Manse, and then he went on home.

'Now in that time every man rose very early, long before day, to thrash wi' the flail. The next night the minister sent his man wi' a rope and a lantern to G—— (that was Tam's hoose, ye see), and he bid him go, once the house was dark, to the barn, and hang a rope wi' a noose on it above Tam's thrashing-floor. Well, the man does this and goes aff a bit to watch.

'In a little Tam cam' oot and he lighted his lamp, and the first thing he saw was the rope wi' the noose and his ain shadow big and black on the wa' behind. He just turned and left the lamp lowin', and never stopped till he was at the back o' the bed, and out o' that he didna move till well on in the daylight. When he cam' out the rope was gone.

'Well, Tam said nothing, and the minister said nothing, and he swore his man to say nothing; but before the end o' the week the minister heard that Tam had been seen going towards the Bringeane, where the kirk was, very late at night.

'The next Sabbath, after the service, the minister said, "*Now go and look in the box,*" and sure enough there was every penny that should be. The minister never said a word of what he had done, and it was not till after his death and that of auld Tam that the "man" revealed the way in which he played the devil "for one night only!"

\* \* \*

The verses which follow take a somewhat pessimistic view of things and worlds. If this be the worst of all possible worlds, as pessimists declare, why, the others must be better, and may be very good indeed. Old Dumas declared that Heaven had made but one drama, this life of ours, that for six thousand years man had been hissing the piece, but that he, for one, would never hiss it. To hiss the drama, as performed on other stages, with other companies and properties, does appear premature.

#### A WARNING TO NEW WORLDS.

You far-off star serene and cold;  
 You've lived through cycles more than we,  
 In you the mystery is unrolled  
 Right to the end, whate'er it be,

What light would on our darkness rise,  
 Could we observe your bleak expanse,  
 Know why you left, all coldly wise,  
 The shining stellar dance!

Ah, could some kindly messenger  
 The lesson of your life rehearse,  
 He might remark, to Jupiter:—  
 'Beware of changing bad for worse.  
 The ills of incandescence bear,  
 Firmly a solid crust refuse.  
 Of protoplasm never dare  
 The use or the abuse!'

What havoc saved among the stars  
 That did not rush upon their fate!  
 Too late for Venus and for Mars,  
 For this poor planet, all too late—  
 Star militant among the spheres,  
 A star with many woes oppressed,  
 Who now the unknown watchword hears  
 That passes to the rest.

Ere Being's germ the strong sun bears,  
 Ours shall have fled, for good and all,  
 This luckless planet, from its cares  
 Voices of Fate already call,  
 And year by year to rest it wins.  
 How many a millennium  
 Before the Sun *his* life begins,  
 With all his woes to come!

Too late for even the youngest star,  
 When Nebulæ, as it appears,  
 Without premeditation are  
 Condensing into rising spheres,  
 And *they* will follow the old plan,  
 Will name their System as they pass,  
 The System that in Gas began,  
 And that will end in Gas.

*They* are no politician's care,  
 No missionary travels through  
 The gaseous vapours that prepare  
 New worlds, new woes, for races new.

Philanthropists—ye do your best.

One world—how many worlds there be!

Convert the Masses—but arrest,

Arrest the Nebulæ!

MAY KENDALL.

\* \* \*

Mr. Oscar Wilde's theory, in *Blackwood*, that the Mr. W. H. of Shakspeare's Sonnets was a Mr. William Hughes, an actor of female parts, is ingenious, and to some extent convincing. The twentieth sonnet, in the first edition (1609), is, I am sure from the peculiar typography, addressed to a Mr. Hughes, and other sonnets prove that he was a Will. That he acted, or was one of the contemporary musical family, is only a guess, and the passages which Mr. Wilde interprets on the theory that he was an actor may be otherwise explained. Mr. Dowden, I see, in his edition of the Sonnets, does not agree with Tyrwhitt and Mr. Wilde that

A man in hew, all *Hews* in his controlling,

need be a pun. Mr. Dowden mentions the other italicised words in the Sonnets, but *not* the italicised *Will*. In Sonnet 135, Mr. Dowden does notice the italicised *Will*, and quotes Halliwell: 'In Shakspeare's time quibbles of this kind were common.' Exactly, but Mr. Dowden did not say so in his note on *Hews* in Sonnet 20. In 135 'the Quarto marks by italics and capital the play on words, Will = William.' Yes, but the Quarto does the same thing exactly in Sonnet 20, manifestly with punning design. So I, for one, believe in Mr. Hughes, but not in any inferences that have been drawn as to his character, conduct, personal charms, and profession.

A. LANG.

### The 'Donna.'

THE EDITOR begs to acknowledge the receipt of the following sums. Contributions received after July 10 will be acknowledged in the September number:—

H. Langford 2s. 9d. G. A. Grierson, Gaya, Bengal, 7l. J. D. 5s. Edith 20s. R. Cobbold, a parcel of magazines. C. Surrey, a parcel of clothing.

### NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The Editor requests that his correspondents will be good enough to write to him informing him of the subject of any article they wish to offer, before sending the MS. A stamped and addressed envelope should accompany the MS. if the writer wishes it to be returned in case of non-acceptance. The Editor can in no case hold himself responsible for accidental loss. All communications should be addressed to

The Editor of LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE,

39 Paternoster Row, London, E.C.

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